Traumatised Communities

On the Way towards Reconciliation. A Case Study on Guatemala with Special Emphasis on Churches in Guatemala.

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TRAUMATISED COMMUNITIES:

ON THE WAY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION.

A CASE STUDY ON GUATEMALA WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON CHURCHES IN GUATEMALA.

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To Claudia,

companion, friend, counsellor

the love of my life.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the connection between community trauma and reconciliation. Based on a case study about how Guatemalans dealt with traumatic events, the thesis focuses in particular on the role of the churches in Guatemala. One of the main challenges that traumatised communities face is dealing with the sufferings of the past. Notably the churches will need to think about their understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation within a traumatised community. All too often forgiveness is either denied because of the magnitude of the crimes committed or forgiveness is granted without asking for repentance and restoration. Consequently, communities tend to either disapprove of reconciliation or support a hasty peace process without sufficiently dealing with the victims' needs.

The investigation was based on literature review and on qualitative expert interviews conducted in Guatemala. The interviewees were partly from organisations with a church background and partly from a non-church background.

The results suggest that within the Guatemalan context more emphasis should be given to an approach that tries to actively involve the perpetrators when dealing with the past. In addition, bystanders should be encouraged to acknowledge their role within the conflict. Also, the churches should be prepared to help overcome communal trauma by encouraging ecumenical relationships and by actively supporting their members' spiritual growth in order to assist in the process of reconciliation. External intervention is important after traumatic events, yet it needs to take into account the spiritual landscape. And finally, love has to be considered as a core factor in trauma recovery.

The results of this thesis make clear that reconciliation depends on the way former enemies shape their relationships. It is important that the parties within a conflict act with humility and with a preparedness to change, basing their behaviour and decision-making on their spiritual beliefs about love, non-violence, and peace.

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Introduction

Wars and disasters have scarred countless people and their communities around the globe. In the aftermath of the two world wars in the last century and after the numerous other wars, conflicts, and disasters since then, it became increasingly apparent that following a war or disaster it is not sufficient to only deal with physical healing, reconstruction or replacement of destroyed property. Psychological injuries have also been shown to cause complications in the recovery process of entire nations. For several decades now the problem of individual psychological trauma as a consequence of life threatening incidents has been investigated extensively and much knowledge has been gained about diagnoses and treatment of such traumas. However, the impact of trauma on communities was not researched until much later. Events like the genocide in Rwanda, the transition period from apartheid towards democracy in South-Africa, the war in the former Yugoslavia, the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, and hurricane Katrina in 2005 and several other horrific events have contributed to an increasing understanding of the impact of large scale violence or huge disasters on communities.

While this research focuses primarily on human-inflicted trauma some references to coping processes after disasters have revealed helpful aspects of dealing with traumatised communities. These aspects entail ensuring safety, providing basic needs like food, clean water and housing, and protection from future disasters with disaster risk reduction strategies – in the aftermath of human inflicted trauma this last aspect would consist of guaranteeing non-recurrence.

The international community has increasingly become aware of these necessities and usually provides timely emergency aid. Currently the main challenge, however, is not so much the short term response but the long term recovery of a group, community, or society. While the consequences of disasters can have severe influences on a community's health, atrocities committed by humans also raise the problem of how it is possible to live together after what has happened. In Rwanda, South Africa, Yugoslavia and other countries the victims frequently have to live side by side with their former tormentors. This leads to almost insurmountable problems in the process of community building. These problems demand dealing with questions of truth, justice, reparation, restoration, guarantee of non-recurrence, forgiveness and reconciliation. To

this day, many countries like Guatemala, with a traumatic past, lack trust, have a political culture that is dominated by fear, and have high rates of criminality. This research intends to help traumatised communities in their recovery process by focussing on the situation in Guatemala. The country's current situation is shaped by the last century's civil war and the much longer lasting violent oppression of the native communities since the conquest of the Spanish in the 16th century.

Particularly during and after the civil war, numerous organisations have worked tirelessly to help the victims to recover from trauma and to hold the oppressors accountable for their deeds. This dissertation assesses the impact of these strategies on Guatemalan society and highlights some problems within the reconciliation process. Special attention is given to the role of the Christian churches and their approach to reconciliation.

The methodologies used include literature review and a case study consisting of qualitative expert interviews and their analysis.[1] The interviews were based on the theory of social constructivism i.e. on the assumption that the people's surrounding reality cannot be an objective reality but is always part of a social construction (Kruse, 2011, p. 10). A qualitative approach aims at reconstructing and elaborating the interviewees' concept of the situation. In contrast to a quantitative method, the qualitative approach is not based on a specific theoretical framework which it tries to verify but is a "dynamic and open, partly circular process of investigation into which should be incorporated as few as possible predetermined views in order to obtain empirical reconstructed concepts" (ibid., p. 13)[2].

Because the interviews cannot depict an objective reality but always describe the specific version of the interviewee's reality this case study does not aim at finding out facts about certain events but emphasises the meaning each participant ascribes to these events (ibid., p. 11). Out of these different versions of perceived reality a common core can be deduced that leads to a consistent picture of relevant aspects for coping with community trauma. The qualitative approach values particularly the relevance of the individual's history and view of what happened in the past. It appreciates the extensive experience that the interviewees have in their field without necessarily having published their knowledge. Most of the experts are practitioners who

[1] The interviews and citations in Spanish as well as some citations in German were translated into English by the author. Grammatical errors in the Spanish have not been corrected.
[2] „Der qualitative Forschungsprozess ist dagegen ein dynamisch-offener, teilweise sogar zirkulärer Forschungsprozess, in den so wenig wie möglich an Setzungen eingespeist werden darf, um so mit empirisch rekonstruierten Konzepten herauszukommen".

do not particularly focus on research and scientific publications. In addition, the anonymity of the interviews provided an environment in which each interviewee could express his or her opinion openly, thus, a deeper understanding of the situation in Guatemala could be gained. In the context of the Guatemalan internal armed conflict, qualitative interviews enable the researcher to deduce a common ground out of the individual stories, showing how a community could be able to cope with the horrific events that so many Guatemalans experienced. In contrast to a quantitative approach, the qualitative approach includes the highly relevant context of each participant, and therefore gives a broader picture of the coping strategies after trauma and of specific views about truth, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Again, each participant in the interviews describes his or her own reality out of a unique perspective, constructing their reality out of their own system of understanding (ibid., p. 50). Aspects like different belief-systems, educational and social background, and life experiences that shaped their convictions and principles are significant in the process of understanding and evaluation of the interviews. Consequently, the interviews are not seen as reporting facts but as a specific view that makes sense within the interviewees' perceptions (ibid.). This however places some challenges in the process of understanding. It is a challenge to evaluate all these different views with its subjective interpretative patterns (ibid., p. 13). At first sight it might look as if the terms used mean and describe the same issues. Yet usage and meaning also depend on the individual's interpretative framework (ibid. 14). Therefore, knowledge can only be gained gradually by continuously dealing with the collected data and readjusting the research process in order to have a better understanding of the research topic (ibid.). This could mean to adapt the questions in the interview according to the participant's background and interpretative framework.

In addition, it is of particular importance for the researcher of being constantly aware of the own interpretative framework (ibid., p. 16). The researcher could otherwise be tempted to interpret the interviewees' opinions according to his or her own framework of understanding and as a result making fit what does not fit into this framework. A scientifically guided process of understanding puts an emphasis on not-understanding and seeks to modify one's own framework of understanding instead of manipulating the object of understanding (ibid., p. 39).

This process of understanding waits for the "eureka effect" that leads towards new forms of understanding the other (ibid.)[3].

Taking into account that the interviewees' frame of reference as well as their worldview and experiences determine their unique view on the topic of research, it was crucial to design the interview process in a way in which each interviewee was able to influence the structure of the communication process. The researcher had to provide an open space to the interviewee so that he or she could express what was most relevant to them without interferences through theoretical presumptions that could manipulate the answers (ibid., p. 58).

However, the aim of this study required a certain amount of structure given by the researcher. This study wishes to illuminate a distinct set of topics, such as dealing with the past, reconciliation, forgiveness, truth, and impunity. Consequently, the interviewer had to make sure that these topics were dealt with during the interview. Hence, some amount of structure was necessary. Moreover, the type of interview chosen was a guided interview in the form of an expert interview which is characterised by following along certain topics (ibid., p. 62). Consequently, the interviews were based on a field manual with open questions, which allowed the interviewee to respond freely in accordance with his or her own background and to choose to respond to the given topics in a way that was most meaningful to her or him.[4] Thus, the topics of the interview were addressed in many different ways depending on the participants' background.

The field manual was gradually adapted and reduced to only a few questions so that the participants' opinions could unfold freely. Those interviewees who were more articulate valued these open questions, however, those who were less confident felt safer with a more detailed structured interview. In general, there were no questions about mere facts except for reasons of better understanding of the context. In addition, no questions were asked to which the researcher already knew the answer in order to gain as much new knowledge as possible and

[3] For example, as will be shown later, the different opinions about forgiveness made more sense when it became clear that the gains and losses of forgiving where very different. Apart from being central to Christian doctrine, the victim's forgiveness reduced the danger of continuing threats from the perpetrators and the perpetrators' demand to be forgiven prevented them from having to deal with their own difficult past.

[4] A complete list of the organisations represented by the interviewees can be found in the appendix.

to create situations of surprise (cf. Kruse, 2011, p. 80). Furthermore, the design of the questions tried to touch the interviewee's "system of relevance" (ibid.)[5].

Kruse remarks, that the focus of the research that uses expert interviews is not on understanding the interviewee in a phenomenological way as a complete person. To the contrary, the focus is on the person as a "representative of a group of experts with a certain way of behaviour and worldview" [6] (ibid., p. 61). This includes an interest in "implicit knowledge"[7] (ibid., p. 291) that values the person's individual biography. The questions not only wish to elicit pertinent information but to gain a deeper understanding of the background of the experts' knowledge allowing narrative parts within the interviews (ibid.). This, however makes it necessary to deal with the "fluid relation between the status as an expert and subjectivity" (ibid., p. 271)[8]. Kruse states that "the topic of research is not an objective fact nor is the experts' knowledge about it the result of an objective compilation" (ibid., p. 273)[9]. An expert interview, therefore, does not depict reality but constructs meaning through a communication process (ibid., p. 274). This research, therefore, brings different experts into dialogue. The outcome will not be an objective truth but seeks to elicit the meaning that a number of experts ascribe to certain key topics. This outcome then give an idea about what is meaningful for Guatemalans in respect to their history, to past and current violence and to their ideas about how to deal with it.

As the purpose of the study was, to find out how Guatemala and particularly its churches could find new ways of promoting reconciliation by dealing with the traumatic past, it was necessary to choose interview partners who are experts on at least one of the central topics: truth processes, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation in relation to trauma. In addition they were required to be experienced in working with traumatised communities or groups helping them to cope with experiences of past and current violence.

Consequently, the interviews did not focus on individuals who had faced traumatic events but on people who were able to discuss the topics on a meta-level. If the Interviews would have been based solely on the biography of the victims the focus would have been on individual coping strategies based on individual stories. Expert interviews on the other hand concentrate

[5] E.g.:"In the context of your work with traumatized people, what comes to your mind if you hear the word reconciliation?" Or "What do you think about forgiveness?"
[6] "Vielmehr gelten sie als Repräsentanten für die Handlungs- und Sichtweisen einer bestimmten Expertengruppe."
[7] "implizites Wissen"
[8] "… fließende Verhältnis von Expertenstatus und Subjekthaftigkeit".
[9] "Hierbei wird weder der Forschungsgegenstand als objektiver Tatbestand noch das Wissen der Akteure darüber als Resultat einer objektiven Erfassung genommen."

more on general aspects helping to understand the broader connections of the relevant topics – which is certainly also shaped by the individual's biography. Even though many of the interviewees have also been victims in one way or the other, they have acquired the ability to see the needs of the groups they are working with, thus, are able to perceive issues that go beyond the individual.

Qualitative research wishes to be able to generalise certain aspects from the interviews. Therefore, the interviews have to capture the society's heterogeneity (ibid., p. 86). The sample of interviewees contained experts working with a wide range of social groups, thus representing large parts of Guatemalan society. They comprised rural and urban groups, women, children, youth, poor people and middle class, educated people and illiterates.

Apart from the challenge of choosing adequate interviewees, it is important to have in mind how to deal with the problem of proximity and distance. Kruse remarks that not only distance can be a problem for the interview process but also closeness and familiarity (ibid. , p. 92). If the interviewer and the interviewee are too close, the interviewee might not say all he would say to a more distanced person because he or she could assume that the interviewer knows what he or she meant without saying (ibid.). Within this research this was particularly the case with participants with a church background. The pastoral background of the researcher could lead these interviewees to the fantasised conclusion that in theological and spiritual matters they share the same ground. One way of dealing with this problem was to "alienate the system of relevance" of the other person (ibid.), meaning, not taking for granted what the other means by asking more questions and by having the patience to let the other "draw the complete picture".

More difficult, however, was to bridge the distance between researcher and interviewee. An interview needs an environment of basic trust in which the interviewees feel safe to reveal their opinions (ibid.). Guatemala in general has an environment of mistrust. It was therefore crucial to have a contact person who was highly trusted and who made the first contact when arranging interviews. In addition, the documents of the ethical approval by the King's College London helped to present the research as an endeavour that was officially recognised by a trustworthy institution outside of Guatemala. Therefore, the participants were first contacted by a local expert who explained the aims of research and the interview process in detail. They were then informed about the confidentiality of the data which were handled according to the rules and

regulations required by the King's College London (2013). Apart from these strategies, it was the researcher's duty to establish connection and an environment of trust during the initial phase of the meeting.

The discussion about reconciliation in this research has a theological emphasis. The backbone is the case study on Guatemala and the discussion of the contribution of the following authors: John Paul Lederach, Robert Schreiter, Desmond Tutu, Miroslav Volf, and John Howard Yoder. The guiding parameters for the choice of these authors were their theological approach towards social reconciliation that engages in an interdisciplinary discussion, the variety of different churches they represent (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopal Church, Mennonite), their interest in the church's role in dealing with societal problems such as injustice and trauma, and the widespread acknowledgement of their expertise.

The theological emphasis is due to the nature of Guatemalan society as most Guatemalans belong to a Christian church and define themselves as Christians. This does not mean that those who suffered the most, namely the Mayan community (who are partly non-Christian), are excluded thus perpetuating colonial attitudes in this thesis. Quite the contrary is the case. It is the intention of this research to give a voice to those who have no voice, i.e. to support those who suffer or suffered from trauma. In this sense, this research intends to contribute to the fight for the rights of the suffering. As will be shown, there have been numerous people within the Christian community who have risked their lives to fight injustice and oppression, irrespective of the victim's background. This research intends to reach this aim by helping Guatemalan churches to take a stand concerning the topics of forgiveness and reconciliation on the background of a traumatised community. The research wishes to capacitate churches to assist their members in discerning between adequate and harmful ways of talking about forgiveness and reconciliation. They should able to be examples by looking into their own role in the past, by asking for and offering forgiveness to others, and to integrate God's special concern for all suffering and oppressed people into their ministries and thus fighting for a restored and reconciled community. In addition, this research wishes to encourage leaders of non-church organisations to critically engage in the discussion about the importance of spirituality for traumatised people and helpers alike, even if international partners and the research community are reluctant to do so. In this sense, this research project tries to identify some elements that

foster reconciliation by giving voice to the victims, acknowledging their suffering and valuing their spiritual needs.

In the first chapter, this dissertation gives an overview of individual trauma, of the historical genesis of diagnoses relating to traumatic events and of the effects on the individual. While, initially, traumatised people were stigmatised as being weak (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 13; Venzlaff, Dulz, & Sachsse, 2009, p. 11), psychological research found evidence of neural changes in the victims who were exposed to traumatic events (Bessel A. van der Kolk, 2006; Sachsse, 2009a). This helped to develop adequate coping processes. However, it soon became clear that dealing with trauma would need an interdisciplinary approach including the care of mind, body and soul. In addition, trauma also affects the surroundings and can even be passed on to following generations (Danieli, 2006; Lars Weisaeth, 2006). Therefore, trauma coping strategies have to include the people close to the traumatised person.

The second chapter takes up this problem and shifts the focus to community trauma. While entire communities can be affected, it does not necessarily mean that each member suffers from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Yet the overall situation is shaped by the community's narratives and the "chosen trauma" (Volkan, 2010, p. 50) that reflect the suffering of the past. Olga Botcharova's (2001) Seven Steps of Forgiveness and Carolyn Yoder's (2005) "cycle of trauma" help to explain the different stages a community experiences and highlight the danger of victims becoming aggressors.

The third chapter discusses coping strategies after community trauma, with the exception of reconciliation which will be central in chapter five. Three key strategies are important: dealing with difficult life conditions, healing past wounds, and complexifying identities. Dealing with difficult life conditions emphasises the need for a community to return to normal life with basic needs being fulfilled and the immediate threat to life having ceased. Regaining a feeling of normality helps to heal past wounds and gives space for developing new meaning and new narratives of one's life and history without dehumanising the enemy. This chapter also discusses how external intervention can influence the healing process in a positive way and how it is possible to support individuals and communities in their efforts to regain agency without building new structures of dependency. For many victims it is a sign of hope when

others show an interest in their wellbeing. The chapter concludes with an analysis of coping efforts in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the case study conducted in Guatemala. The interviewees' views are compared with the findings of the previous chapters on individual and communal trauma and on possible coping strategies. The Guatemalan experts reported clear signs of community trauma in Guatemala. Dire life conditions, dualistic narratives, and a uni-dimensional sense of identity are widespread. Violence has become the core strategy for resolving conflicts. However, the country is making progress in combating impunity and in searching for the truth about the past. A few trials of former high ranking political and military leaders are underway although the accused and their allies justify their actions vehemently. Special attention in this chapter is given to the role of the churches. It became apparent that they have a mixed record in their efforts to help overcome trauma. Some churches supported the suffering population during and after the war, others were inclined to back the military's strategies. Even today many churches are hesitant about engaging in a recovery processes and propose instead a quick "forgive and forget" approach. Others, however, try to combine the arduous search for truth and justice with the costly process of forgiveness and reconciliation. The fifth chapter focuses on reconciliation with repentance and forgiveness as a central aspect. Five different approaches towards reconciliation from the above named authors are presented. This chapter combines the findings of previous chapters on trauma and coping strategies, the findings from the case study in Guatemala, and discussion about reconciliation.

As a result, five key aspects emerged for the situation in Guatemala. 1. A non-violent approach should be used when dealing with perpetrators. Fighting impunity is important. However restorative justice approaches should be considered rather than the use of punitive justice. In Guatemala, reconciliation and the restoration of the victim ultimately needs the perpetrators' participation, their repentance and a change in their attitudes and behaviour. 2. Bystanders should be helped to assume responsibility. The bystanders' role should be clarified and their involvement in the conflict explained so that they can be part of a movement of repentance and forgiveness. 3. Churches need to become key players by initiating a movement of repentance. The churches in Guatemala play a major role in society. By acknowledging their own failures and by being an example for the church members on repentance and forgiveness the church could become a vital agent for change on the way towards reconciliation. 4. External

intervention has to take the spiritual landscape into account. Spirituality is a key resilience factor that fosters the recovery of Guatemalan communities. Particularly within the theological institutions a growing awareness of what is needed in a situation of community trauma could be crucial in the long term for the churches' involvement in the societal healing processes. 5. Love should be considered to be a core factor in trauma recovery. God's reconciliation through Christ is based on God's love for humankind. His followers are called to adopt the same attitude when dealing with their enemies. A consequence of love is that the individual's identity is strengthened. Those who love know who they are. In an environment of community trauma where identity is threatened, love opens the way to shape justice and truth processes in a restorative way which then can have the power to break the cycle of violence and trauma.

These aspects of overcoming trauma are meant as an amendment to the many valuable contributions which have already been made in this field. This research has a specific focus on Guatemala and its spiritual landscape. The results indicate that the Christian community has not sufficiently assumed responsibility for contributing to the issue of reconciliation within society at large. Therefore, the results of this thesis focus on aspects that could help them to assume their responsibility, by thinking about their own past and how to be an example for the community, by reflecting on how to talk about forgiveness and reconciliation, and by discerning between adequate and harmful ways of doing so.

Following the suggestions of this research would mean a major shift in attitude and behaviour for a number of actors in Guatemalan society. The churches would need to develop closer ecumenical ties when discussing the role of the churches in promoting reconciliation with God, among its members, and in society at large. This, however, requires an attitude of humility. Churches would need to meet other Christian denominations with increased openness and promote reconciliation among the different churches. In addition, it is important to point out factors that are an impediment to reconciliation (impunity, injustice, police-violence, corruption, etc.). As a consequence, some churches with good connections to business and political leaders could lose political and financial support. Church leaders and donors from abroad might not understand the shift towards a more ecumenical stand and terminate important projects. There is much to lose, yet plenty to gain. It can be expected, if these suggestions were implemented, that the churches' prophetic voice would be much clearer and its impact on its members and society at large would be much stronger. A repenting church on the way towards

reconciliation that raises its voice for the poor and the weak without forgetting its spiritual mission follows the example of Jesus Christ and can thus have a powerful impact on the wellbeing of society.

Another aspect that would result in a major change in attitude and behaviour is changing the way the perpetrators are treated by applying processes of restorative justice. This could break up the lines of conflict between left and right wing supporters, who are fighting about the interpretation of the country's history, about impunity, justice, and guilt. Honesty about what happened, in the form of acknowledging the suffering and admitting wrongdoing, could serve as an example for honesty in other areas, such as in business, politics, and the security forces.

Yet this would also require an attitude of humility and openness towards meeting the enemy under different preconditions. On the one hand, the fight against impunity would need to consider new forms of action by focussing less on retributive justice and more on restorative justice. Leaders of the country's security forces and their allies on the other hand would need to stop justifying violence, be prepared to admit wrongdoing and show acts of repentance. As a consequence, the impasse between high levels of impunity and the population's increasing demand for draconian forms of punishment could end. The population would be able to see that wrongdoing is addressed properly, thus, trust in the justice system could increase. This in turn could result in reduced financial misallocations and corruption and could therefore increase the communities' well-being.

The foundation of all these changes is an attitude of identity affirming love. Particularly those who see themselves as Christians – i.e. a large percentage of the Guatemalan population – could make a difference when following Jesus in loving their enemies. Consequently, the well-being of the other would be of prime importance. The light of truth would illuminate the past, with mercy, justice, and peace at its side (Lederach, 1999, p. 53). Love would restore and complexify identities by providing new standpoints through loving acceptance for those whose identity had been shattered after traumatic events (Sedmak, 2007) and through the enemies' willingness to discover more about the other than is apparent at first sight.

This, admittedly, utopian sounding vision might not be fully achieved; probably only few will want to submit themselves to changes in attitude and behaviour and therefore only small changes might be achieved (Philpott, 2010, p. 106). We are living in a fallen world (Rm 8:18).

However, a church that puts its trust in Jesus Christ can rely on his power (Mt 28:18) and become the hope for that world (Mt 5:13-16).

Chapter 1 The concept of trauma

1.1 Preliminary remarks

1.1.1 Focus on individual trauma

When speaking of trauma, a distinction has to be made between individual and community trauma. Both require specific approaches of intervention, although it is clear that they influence each other. The distinction, yet not separation, helps to focus on the most relevant problems that both individuals and communities face after traumatic events. The response to an individual's trauma will more likely be centred on the psychological aspects of a person, whereas the response to community trauma will have a stronger emphasis on meeting the group's needs, beginning with the simple necessities of life. Thus, a community needs a different approach and cannot be treated as a mere accumulation of individuals (2006). As will be seen, the foremost task after mass trauma is not to overwhelm people with trauma workshops. The need for some people to receive individual therapy should be combined with additional elements of intervention that help a group, community or societies as a whole to grow together after being torn apart. Robben and Suárez-Orozco (2000) note: "Populations subjected to massive trauma are affected as groups, rather than as individuals, even though each person works in a particular way through the effects" (p. 24).

On the other hand, research on individual trauma informs the concept of community trauma since the "social tissue of a community can be damaged in ways similar to the tissues of mind and body"(ibid.). Robben and Suárez-Orozco continue to emphasise that just as individual trauma causes the rupture and destruction of one's psyche and meaning system, the devastation of community trauma is appalling: "Massive trauma ruptures social bonds, undermines communality, destroys previous sources of support, and may even traumatize those members of a community, society or group who were absent when the catastrophe or persecution took place" (ibid.).

The psychological and physiological effects of individual trauma give a clearer picture of what is needed after group trauma. For example, one key element in the treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is stabilisation. Knowing this makes the provision of basic needs one of the most important tasks, when the infrastructure has been devastated and property has been lost. The provision of these basic necessities enhances the sense of security and makes a new

everyday routine possible (Boyd, Quevillon, & Engdahl, 2010; Dass-Brailsford, 2010b; Errante, 1997; Frančišković et al., 2008).

This research deals particularly with community trauma. In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to lay the groundwork and open the field by exploring trauma on the individual level. The starting point will be the historical development of this specific field of research, which leads to an overview of the latest research and its key authors. This will be followed by a clarification of terms used in the definition and explanation of the concept of individual trauma.

Finally, the different factors that influence the individual's response to traumatic events will be assessed. The nature of the event, the social environment, and the individual's personal preconditions shape the specific reactions (Webb, 2004a). With these factors in mind, a spectrum of possible interventions and trauma coping strategies can be defined and developed.

1.1.2 Development of the field

It was not until the late 19th century that certain behaviour was linked to specific events in a person's life. As one of the first in his field, Sigmund Freud drew the conclusion that every case of hysteria is caused by either a single or repeated untimely sexual experiences in a person's early youth (Freud & Freud, 1952, p. 439)[10]. Freud as well as Pierre Janet worked with their teacher Jean-Martin Charcot at the La Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris on the phenomenon of hysteria. Both came to the conclusion that some events cause a "split conscience" (Freud) or "dissociation" (Janet) (Venzlaff, et al., 2009, p. 10). Freud thought that overwhelming sights, sounds, and other forms of events that could not be processed by the person's mind, caused psychological symptoms such as hysterical paralysis and loss of function. In particular a sudden fright could lead to mental shock (C. Brewin, 2007, p. 4).

In 1892 the German neurologist Hermann Oppenheimer described a psychological phenomenon that resembles today's condition of PTSD. He specified the mental state of some of his patients as restless, agitated, insomnious, afraid of people, and it seemed as if the preceding event or accident had gained command over the soul (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 10).

[10] "Ich stelle also die Behauptung auf, zugrunde jedes Falles von Hysterie befinden sich – durch die analytische Arbeit reproduzierbar, trotz des Dezennien umfassenden Zeitintervalles – eine oder mehrere Erlebnisse von vorzeitiger sexueller Erfahrungen, die der frühesten Jugend angehören." ("I also assert that the basis of all cases of hysteria – repeatable through analytical work even decades afterwards – is one or more untimely sexual experiences during the earliest years of youth".)

During the events of the First World War soldiers showed new phenomena of mental reactions to the appalling experiences they had faced. Soldiers shaking uncontrollably, having constant fear and staring absently were diagnosed with the term “shell shock”, which was thought to have been caused by the impact of exploding mines. The British psychologist Charles Myers also called it “trench neurosis” (Venzlaff, et al., 2009, p. 11). Robben and Suárez-Orozco (2000) explain that “men suffering from shell shock were regarded as cowards and, very much as hysterical women, morally corrupt” (p. 13).

Abraham Kardiner, a student of Freud’s, was convinced that horrid events had an impact on the neurophysiology and used the new diagnostic term “physioneurosis”. He developed a treatment for traumatised soldiers that consisted in hypnosis, debriefing or the use of drugs. He emphasised the importance of re-living the situation and then being sent back to the unit as soon as possible. Of crucial importance was the constant awareness of possible relapses and consequently the provision of a supportive environment in the soldier’s unit (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, pp. 14-15; Venzlaff, et al., 2009, p. 13).

Although carefully researched by Kardiner, this position did not remain unchallenged. Almost 20 years later, at the beginning of World War II, Friedrich Dansauer and Walter W. Schellworth denied the connections between physiological reactions and experiences. Dansauer and Schellworth were convinced that the law of cause and effect could only be valid in a spatial / physical environment. Moreover, they assumed that various personal preconditions made some persons more vulnerable to mental illnesses than others. (Venzlaff, et al., 2009, p. 16).

This opinion had a major impact in the aftermath of World War II. The German government compensated many individuals who suffered from the delayed or long term consequences of being held in concentration camps. Unfortunately up until the 1960s the German authorities relied on the findings of Dansauer and Schellworth and denied reparations to numerous concentration camp survivors by pointing to the possibility of pre-existing weaknesses in the victim’s mental strength. Kurt R. Eissler, a US-psychoanalyst, questioned this view by asking in exasperation how many children a man had to lose without developing symptoms in order to be judged as having a normal mental constitution (Venzlaff, et al., 2009, pp. 16-17).

Extensive research on Holocaust survivors finally led to a more profound understanding of psychological reactions after traumatic events. The term “concentration camp syndrome” or

“survivor’s syndrome” became common and influenced the direction of such research. Conferences and workshops on the consequences of the Holocaust were being held and increasingly shaped a new view of the suffering of the victims. The conviction grew that massive traumas lead to a relatively uniform and persistent symptom development. Yet although knowledge and understanding of the psychological and physiological consequences of trauma grew, the treatment strategies were still underdeveloped (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 16; Venzlaff, et al., 2009, pp. 17-18). This began to change slowly. Through the work of researchers such as Yael Danieli and Henry Krystal, who were pioneers in researching the effects of the Holocaust, the gap between knowledge of the symptoms of trauma and adequate treatment strategies narrowed significantly. Danieli (1998), for instance, highlighted the transgenerational effects of trauma and the importance of including the wider community’s reactions. Treatment had to be more than psychological techniques. The culture, support groups and society at large play a vital role in the recovery process (cf. Krystal, 2006; Moses & Cohen, 1993).

As a consequence, Danieli founded the “Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and their Children” (GPHSC), to provide psychological help and to counteract their profound sense of isolation. As Rafael Moses and Yechezkel Cohen, two Israeli psychologists, point out, Israeli society had “the wish not to have these terrible events be true, not to have them touch us, not to be too closely aware of what took place” (cited by Volkan, 1997, p. 45). Danieli (2006) called this the “‘trauma after the trauma’, or ‘the second injury’ to victims by maintaining the conspiracy of silence” (p. 35).

This trauma was very likely to be passed on to the next generation. As a prevention, Danieli’s Group Project aimed at helping Holocaust survivors to integrate their “experiences into the totality of the survivors’ and their children’s lives” and raising the awareness of possible transgenerational transmission of trauma (ibid.Danieli, 2006, p. 37). Further research on transgenerational trauma was conducted by Lars Weisaeth and Ellinor Major (2006), coming to the conclusion that “a parent exposed to a traumatic event should not share the experience with the children but rather share with them what was to be learned from the experience” (p. 239).

The influence of the research on the Holocaust, on victims and perpetrators[11], can hardly be underestimated. It laid the groundwork for the development of the concept of PTSD.

PTSD became the dominant concept for interpreting trauma which led to a unilinear and de-contextualised disorder (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 20). Consequently some scholars, with some success, emphasised again the findings on "survivor's syndrome". As Danieli (2006) puts it: "The field seems to be returning to the fuller picture that had been provided by the survivor's syndrome" (pp. 42-43).

The next leap forward in the development of the field of trauma and trauma treatment was marked by the Vietnam War. Up to 35 per cent of the war veterans suffered from trauma related diseases. Robben and Suárez-Orozco (2000) attribute this high number of affected veterans to the "humiliating reception at home in a society torn by the war, and the overall indifference of the military establishment" that counteracted the healing process after the terrible experiences of the war (p. 20). Summerfield (1995) emphasises: "Victims react to extreme trauma in accordance with what it means to them. Generating these meanings is an activity that is socially, culturally, and often politically framed" (p. 20). For the general public of the United States, the veterans were not seen as heroes.

Among others, it was the Veteran Administration, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) as it is today, that pushed for the development of a recognised diagnosis of what the veterans experienced. The questions of veterans' benefits stood at the forefront of the veterans' concern. It was not until the third version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, that Post-traumatic Stress Disorder was incorporated. This meant a considerable relief for the Vietnam War Veterans. Kolb (2006) points out: "The recognition of PTSD as a medical subject helped to improve treatment, patients are treated with much more respect [and] sick men have been able to obtain disability ratings and their pensions" (p. 107). Researchers like Charles Figley, Matthew J. Friedman, Mardi Horowitz, Lawrence C. Kolb, and John P. Wilson were most prominent in developing the concept of PTSD and furthering its official recognition (Figley, 2006a; Friedman, 2006; Horowitz, 2006; Kolb, 2006; Wilson, 2006).

[11] The works of Robert Lifton (2006) on Nazi doctors led to important insights into the patterns of behaviour of perpetrators. Lifton used the term "doubling" in describing the two distinct lives of Auschwitz Nazi doctors, with an Auschwitz-self at work and the ordinary-self at home (p. 130).

Other contributions to the development of the subject area of PTSD were influenced by concern for abused women and victims of crimes and accidents. Lenore Terr's (1990, 2006) research on a group of school children abducted in their school bus in 1976 (the Chowchilla study) delivered criteria for PTSD that were incorporated in DSM-III and DSM-IV.

From the 1970s on, Judith Herman focused her research on the traumatic experiences of abused women and domestic violence in general. Her work culminated in her book "Trauma and Recovery" (1992) which was regarded as groundbreaking. Her work helped to broaden the definition of PTSD in the fourth edition of the DSM by introducing a new form of PTSD, complex PTSD (Herman, 2006).

In the 1980s many clinicians thought that the key factor for the development of PTSD was childhood abuse and that this could explain almost every symptom. This was even thought to be the case with patients who denied having had experiences of abuse. Questions arose, as to whether it was possible that some victims completely forgot their dire experiences. The discussion led to a new understanding of the neurological implications of trauma and its effect on memory. Lenore Terr (2006) found out that "memories could be full, partial, or entirely blocked. They could be totally true, essentially true with false details, entirely false, or essentially false with true details" (pp. 192-193). The first neuro-imaging study on PTSD that supported that view, was conducted by Bessel van der Kolk in the early 1990s. One of the core findings was a relative deactivation of the speech area in the left anterior prefrontal cortex that reduced the capacity to articulate feelings significantly (Bessel A. van der Kolk, 2006). Van der Kolk therefore supported therapies that used non-verbal methods like Francine Shapiro's Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Subsequently, van der Kolk conducted a study on the effectiveness of EMDR with positive results (ibid, p. 222). For him the moment had come to "leave Vienna" and some psychoanalytical principles. As he states in his "Brief Autobiography":

> "To me, 'Leaving Vienna' means abandoning the notion that people can understand their way out of trauma. The notion that in order to process and overcome trauma, people need to create a coherent story does not really seem to hold up. In my opinion, the discovery of EMDR opened up extremely important new ways of looking at what else might be going on in mind and brain that could help people" (ibid.).

Looking back again to the 1970s, Anne Wolbert Burgess has to be mentioned. She worked with rape victims and it is to her credit that she put trauma on the "radar screen for all disciplines" (2006, p. 30). She stood up against the tendency to blame rape victims by improving the perception of the victim, trauma and the victim's behaviour.

The field of trauma research broadened steadily. Beverly Raphael combined the studies of trauma and bereavement describing their influence on mental health (Raphael, 2006). Charles Figley also connects grief with trauma and emphasises the interpersonal consequences (Figley, 2006a). He includes trauma research into the family systems approach, to highlight the "overlooked area of family studies and its importance in understanding the multitude of manifestations of stress, particularly traumatic stress" (ibid., p. 52). His works on compassion fatigue, which describe a secondary traumatisation of those who help traumatised people, are widely recognised.

Frank Ochberg researched what he called the "Stockholm Syndrome", studying the behaviour of hostages and hostage-takers (Ochberg, 2006). This syndrome "explains aspects of attachment to abusive husbands and incestuous fathers. It explains confessing to accomplished interrogators. It is not just conscious, wilful behavior to avoid punishment. It is regression and recovery of a powerful, primitive feeling toward a giver of life"(ibid., p. 145).

Extensive studies were conducted by Zahava Solomon on war and trauma, on the effectiveness of treatments and on the consequences of repeated exposure (Zahava Solomon, 1993, 1995; 2006). She started to divide PTSD into different subtypes: the "reactivated" and the "delayed onset" (2006, pp. 174-175). These concepts helped to understand why symptoms of PTSD could emerge a considerable time after the traumatic event or could relapse at a later stage.

The development of the field of trauma gained significant momentum over recent decades. Yet there is still much research to be done. Recently discussions arose concerning the definition of what can be called a trauma or a traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2010) and how the research could widen its scope to include social and political questions (Becker, 2006, pp. 178-179). Some researchers suggest refraining from pathologising whole communities after, for example, a disaster (Errante, 1997, p. 368), or from changing a social or political problem into a psychopathological problem (Becker, 2006, p. 185).

1.2 Clarification of terms

As the overview of the development of the field showed, the meaning and scope of trauma has changed over time and is still evolving. This continuing development could result in unclear definitions and imprecise usages. The following section, therefore, clarifies key terms and provides the basic working definitions for this research.

1.2.1 The traumatic event

Charles Figley (2008) defines a traumatic event as "the context in which a trauma occurred - be it physical or psychological" (p. 2193). Though the difference seems to be apparent it is important to make a distinction between "trauma" and "traumatic event". This helps to find the above mentioned balance between the psychological and socio-political factors of trauma. The nature of a traumatic event has strong repercussions for the stress responses of the victims and thus has to be taken into account when dealing with the traumatised (Webb, 2004b). For clarity reasons one should therefore refrain from calling a disaster, for instance, a "trauma" but instead call it a "traumatic event". Otherwise it could imply that only the intra-psychic consequences mattered and that the trauma or "wound"[12] caused by an event itself is unimportant in the process of recovering.

A "traumatic event" can be viewed as a sub-topic of a "crisis event". James and Gilliland (cited in Dass-Brailsford, 2010a, p. 50) define crises as "events or situations that are perceived as unbearably difficult and exceed an individual's available resources and ability to cope. In a crisis an adverse force disrupts normal patterns and structured communities so that normal functioning is suspended". Dass-Brailsford (2010a) explains that "although most traumas begin as a crisis, not all crises develop into traumas" (p. 50). The "traumatic event" in contrast is defined as an event that has not only the potential to cause a trauma but has already led to it. It is the level of threat and danger, and the relationship each individual had to the crisis that defines the severity (ibid.) and the point where it becomes a traumatic event. Moreover, the traumatic event itself can have different levels of threat and danger that can lead to varying degrees of trauma.

[12] The Greek word τραῦμα means wound, injury or harm. In a figurative sense it could mean loss or defeat. (Gemoll & Vretska, 1991)

1.2.2 Trauma

1.2.2.1 Trauma and stress

In general, trauma is part of the larger concept of stress (Stamm, 1999, p. 5). Figely (2008) defines stress as "a physical, chemical, or emotional demand that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation" (p. 2193). The stress reactions can be pictured as a continuum, ranging from normal and temporary stress as a result of everyday occurrences to the full-blown PTSD with its physiological effects (Stevan E. Hobfoll, 1989, pp. 29-30). PTSD and other Post-traumatic mental disorders form "the upper end of a stress-response continuum" (C. R. Brewin, 2003, pp. 41-42; cf. Nickerson, Bryant, & Silove, 2008).

Nickerson, Byrant, and Silove (2008) note that only a minority of people who face a traumatic event, develop PTSD (p. 1688). Every trauma has psychological and physical effects on the body, while not every trauma leads to the development of a chronic or long term disorder. Traumatic events cause psychological stress that only in some instances disrupt long-term functioning (ibid., p. 1687).

Nevertheless, researchers differ on the question of which level of the stress continuum the threshold to trauma or traumatic stress should be placed. Some subsume a traumatic event under any major stressful event that includes a major loss.[13] Others narrow the term down to apply only to the really horrific events as distinct from the "ordinary traumas" and "necessary losses" (Apfel & Simon, 2000, p. 103).

The draft revision of the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2010) points in the same direction, by supporting a better distinction between "traumatic" and "events that are distressing but which do not exceed the 'traumatic' threshold". The American Psychiatric Association's task force on PTSD suggests, defining a traumatic event as encompassing "death or threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violation" – either directly or indirectly (ibid.)[14].

[13] For example Tanya Luhrmann (2000) contrasts a trauma that has psychiatric sequelae with a more "mundane" form of trauma that "leaves its mark as clearly, if in a different manner (...). An executive who has been 'downsized' may not have flashbacks to an assault scene, but his misery is still intense. His shame and anger may still cripple him. (...) The word 'trauma', in common parlance, refers to singular or repeated events which injure. Some injuring events are dramatic and soul-destroying. Some are quiet and humiliating." (p. 158)

[14] The section in DSM-5 draft on PTSD names the ways in which trauma could be experienced: "1. Experiencing the event(s) him/herself. 2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as they occurred to others. 3. Learning that the event(s) occurred to a close relative or close friend; in such cases, the actual or threatened death must have been violent or accidental. 4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting body parts; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse); this does not apply to exposure

It has to be kept in mind that PTSD constitutes the upper end of the stress continuum and that the American Psychiatric Association's aim is to give diagnostic guidelines for the treatment of this disorder. Therefore, the definition of "traumatic" or "trauma" needs to serve this purpose.

Stamm (1999) tries to define trauma from a different perspective. He notes that stressful events "disorganize, re-structure or at least challenge one`s beliefs – of faith in life, in others or in self" (p. 5). The transition, however, from a stressful experience to a *traumatically* stressful experience "is the *demand* for reorientation" (ibid.; emphasis in original). This demand arises when the events exceed "the capacity of the body to adapt to the demands that events have made on it" (C. R. Brewin, 2003, p. 42). In order to cope with stress, a person's resources need to be sufficient for an adequate response. If the individual's resources and the demands of the event are out of balance, i.e. the stress exceeds the resources, a person's well-being is in danger (Webb, 2004b, p. 17). Hobfoll, Dunahoo, and Monnier (1995) acknowledge that in the definition of extreme stress, the differentiation between everyday stressors, major stress and its extreme forms including traumatic stress, are somewhat vague. But like Brewin, Stamm, Webb and others, they support the definition of extreme stress as resulting from events and circumstances "that, because of their objective nature, place massive demands on individuals' abilities to maintain psychological wellness, behavioural and cognitive functioning, and physical integrity" (pp. 29-30). The *traumatic* form of extreme stress is characterised as exceeding the individual's ability for psychological wellness, functioning and integrity.

As stress is about an individual's resources challenged by certain events or circumstances, Hobfoll (1989) developed the theory of Conservation of Resources (COR). In his view, every person tries to protect his or her own resources. Stress arises on three occasions: "First, when there is the threat of significant resource loss, second, when there is actual resource loss, third, when resources are invested without resulting in significant resource gain" (Stevan E Hobfoll, et al., 1995, p. 31). *Traumatic stress* is distinctive in terms of its rapidity of loss of resources and could include multiple and continued losses. As a result, the demands an event places upon an individual, could quickly exceed the available resources (Norris & Thompson, 1995, p. 51). In some cases, the excessive demand causes mental disorders that have a longer lasting impact on the individual's well being.

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through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related." (American Psychiatric Association, 2010)

1.2.2.2 Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

When talking about trauma, most think immediately of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The concept of PTSD is the outcome of intensive research on trauma and traumatic events and is still constantly undergoing further changes. PTSD was not included until the third edition of the DSM (American Psychiatric Association, 1982). The definition was revised for the fourth edition (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), and again changes are suggested in the draft version of fifth edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2010).

In the current version of the DSM a set of six criteria describes the disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The starting point, criterion A, defines what a traumatic event is (involving death, serious injuries or threat of physical integrity), the nature of the individual's involvement (directly affected, witnessing, or learning about events that happened to a family member or close associate), and a description of possible reactions (helplessness, intense fear, or horror). The characteristic symptoms of PTSD are "persistent re-experiencing", "persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness", and "persistent symptoms of increased arousal" (criteria B-D). The duration of the symptoms must be of more than a month (criterion E), and the last criterion, F, specifies that "the disturbance must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning" (p. 463).

The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision (ICD-10) defines PTSD "as a delayed or protracted response to a stressful event or situation (of either brief or long duration) of an exceptionally threatening or catastrophic nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone" (World Health Organization, 2007, F43.1). The ICD-10 names as typical symptoms episodes of repeated re-living (flashbacks), nightmares, numbness, unresponsiveness, hyper-arousal with hyper-vigilance, and others.

This definition permits a wider range of cases to be subsumed under PTSD, as the threshold of trauma or traumatic event is rather vague and gives more room for interpretation than is permitted by the DSM. An example of this is, when specifying a traumatic event as an incident, "which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone" (ibid.). Yet the description of the symptoms is very similar to that in the DSM (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 467).

1.2.2.3 Other post-traumatic stress related pathological reactions

In addition to the PTSD there are other pathological reactions to traumatic events. Nickerson et. al. (2008) list several of these reactions: acute Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in contrast to the chronic and ongoing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder; major depressive disorder which overlaps with PTSD; anxiety disorders like panic disorder consisting of "recurrent and often spontaneous episodes of intense anxiety in which the person fears they will have a heart attack, die, or go crazy" (ibid., p. 1688), or a generalised anxiety disorder with excessive and uncontrollable worry about facing future harm; substance abuse has also been found as being highly co-morbid to PTSD.

Furthermore the whole topic of trauma and grief has to be considered. Corr, Corr, and Bordere (2013, p. 242) define grief simply as a reaction to loss. As a traumatic experience could include feelings of loss, anger and betrayal, Webb (2004b) notes, "it is evident that loss is always part of trauma, whether in the symbolic form of a loss of a sense of safety and security or in the form of a specific loss, such as that of a familiar neighbourhood or one`s home" (p. 11). Normal grief responses ease usually after six months (ibid.). If the grief responses do not diminish, it could indicate a complicated grief or traumatic grief. Goodman (2004) emphasises that grief in its traumatic form is a "variant of, yet distinct from, both trauma and grief reactions" (p. 77). For Maercker and Znoj (2010) this kind of grief can be diagnosed as Complicated Grief Disorder (CGD) and can be called a "younger sibling" of PTSD with characteristic similarities (p. 8). Webb (2004b) states that the differences between normal grief and traumatic grief lie "in the intensity and duration of these responses, which can appear to dominate the bereaved person's life" (pp. 11-12). In addition, traumatic grief develops "when a loss occurs in a traumatic situation" and the usual grief symptoms are combined with traumatic memories (ibid.). The "intrusiveness and intensity of traumatic memories can interfere with the normal bereavement process" (ibid., p. 12). Therefore, traumatic grief requires special attention and treatment in order to allow the mourning process to continue (ibid.) while many of the treatment strategies can be deduced from PTSD therapy rationales (Maercker & Znoj, 2010, p. 8).

1.2.2.4 The physiology of trauma

With all these stress reactions in mind, not surprisingly, researchers on trauma soon became interested in the physiology underlying traumatic stress. The functioning of the Central Nervous System (CNS) after traumatic events needed to be more understood. The work of van der Kolk

(2006) on PTSD, using neuro-imaging methods, helped to increase the understanding of the individual's responses to stress and to improve intervention strategies. Although more research on the functioning of the brain needs to be done and many findings still contain some uncertainties (Sachsse, 2009a, p. 31), current knowledge allows an explanation of the basic physiological patterns of stress reactions.

Jaak Panksepp differentiates between two parts of the central nervous system: a panic system connected to the parasympathetic nervous system and a fear system, connected with the sympathetic nervous system (Sachsse, 2009a). Sachsse (2009a) explains that in a crisis the amygdale, part of the limbic system of the brain, works like a "smoke detector" (cf. Bessel A. van der Kolk, 2002, p. 385), and activates alarm reactions of the central nervous system (Sachsse, 2009a, p. 32). The sympathetic nervous system's function is to constrict blood vessels, increase the heart rate and blood pressure, and inhibit digestion. These reactions prepare the body for fight or flight. The parasympathetic nervous system's function is to calm down after a stress reaction. It slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, dilates blood vessels, and increases the intestinal and gland activity. However, in a situation of danger, the parasympathetic nervous system responds with panic, resulting in a freeze reaction, distress vocalisation (weeping) or deactivation of the speech centre. The dilated blood vessels and the increased intestinal activity lead to shaky knees and, in extreme situations, to soiling oneself.

To a certain extent, the fear-system, the sympathetic nervous system, has the ability to counteract the panic-system. As both systems are activated simultaneously, the sympathetic nervous system with its connection to the hippocampus helps to bring orientation and to classify the danger. The hormones and neurotransmitters noradrenaline and adrenaline increase vigilance and prepare for fight or flight. After the danger has ceased, the solutions that helped to overcome the dangerous situation become imprinted on the memory as a pattern for future reactions to similar events (even if the solutions consist of substance abuse, bulimia, and obsessive compulsive disorder).

If the stressful situation continues and surpasses a certain level, the fear-system and the panic-system become highly activated, releasing large quantities of noradrenalin, adrenalin and cortisol, leading to a state of hyper-arousal. The parasympathetic and the sympathetic nervous system cease to interact in a constructive and self regulating way. On the contrary, each system

reaches its maximum: the parasympathetic nervous system in a state of hyper-inhibition and the sympathetic nervous system in a state of hyper-excitation. It is as if the body tries to accelerate and to slow down at the same time. After a while the sympathetic hyper-arousal diminishes and the parasympathetic hyper-arousal with freeze reactions and dissociation prevails. Dissociation means that stimuli from inside and outside are not processed anymore. It is a withdrawal from reality and could lead to a state of speechless horror. This state can typically be found in PTSD patients. When this happens current experiences are not being processed in the hippocampus and the cortex. A normal reaction would be the transmission of the experiences to the hippocampus and the cortex for further reprocessing. The hippocampus and cortex compare current events with previous experiences, and classify and organise them for long term storage. These new memories are usually consciously accessible.

During traumatic events, however, this processing is blocked. The necessary transmission of information from the amygdale to the hippocampus and the cortex is inhibited through a massive invasion of the stress hormone glutamate. That means that the traumatic experiences remain mostly unconscious and cannot be accessed easily. The hippocampus generates a cognitive map that connects experiences, autobiographical information and other data and thus plays an important role in integrating and evaluating experiences. A blockage of this function of the hippocampus could result in a fragmentation of traumatic experiences, “corporal sensations, odors, and sound that seem strange and isolated from other experiences in life” (Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, & Koenig, 2007, p. 345).Instead, they respond to outside events, called triggers, such as noise, smell, and other reminders of the traumatic event that cause flashbacks and intrusions. Parts of the memory of the event suddenly appear and intrude on the mind as if the horrific incident was happening again (cf. Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 14). To prevent these flashbacks, victims of trauma try to avoid these triggers and sometimes virtually erase parts of their memory to avoid coming near the painful event.

All these physiological reactions are normal and do not lead necessarily to a pathological state like PTSD. Crying out, stunned reactions, dissociation and denial, intrusive phenomena like flashbacks and nightmares are normal reactions after traumatic events, although the prevalence rate of developing PTSD could be 50 per cent and above, especially among rape and torture victims (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 11).

Chronic PTSD can have a transgenerational impact. Based on Bowlby's attachment theory, Schore (2009, 2010) found out that a traumatised mother with dissociative behaviour affects the development of her child's brain. The baby`s crying is stressful for the mother and serves as a trigger for her to fall into a state of dissociation. Traumatised parents often react with fear to the child's behaviour (Sachsse, 2009a, p. 42). The caregiver's dysfunctional stress regulatory system is being copied by the infant, it is "matching the rhythmic structures of the mother's dysregulated arousal states" (Schore, 2009, p. 197). Schore (2009, p. 196) discovered that the infant's psychobiological reactions comprise two response patterns: hyper-arousal and dissociation. The hyper-arousal is caused by the fear of losing the security of a safe relation with the mother. The sympathetic nervous system becomes highly activated through the release of the stress hormone cortisol. Only moments later the infant falls into a parasympathetic dominant state of withdrawal and dissociation. These factors in a child's early development can have, as Schore notes, "a negative impact on the limbic system maturation, producing enduring neurobiological alterations that underlie affective instability, inefficient stress tolerance, memory impairment, and dissociative disturbances" (ibid., p. 198).

1.2.3 Conclusion

The findings about physiology and research on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in general have rightly gained considerable influence. Treatment strategies improved substantially from the days before PTSD was a recognised condition and those who had faced traumatic events and developed chronic symptoms could finally give a name to their mental and physical state. They could no longer be blamed for a weak character or cowardice but gained official recognition for their suffering.

On the other hand research increasingly focused on the pathological and psychological aspects of trauma. While the research on Holocaust victims had taken a multifaceted approach to trauma, considering the social and political environment as crucial for recovery, the research following the conceptualisation of PTSD largely forgot about these additional aspects. Therefore, some of the most renowned researchers keep reminding the research community of the complexity of trauma. Friedman (2006) remarks: "I have always maintained that the trauma field cuts across the entire spectrum of basic, clinical, and social sciences. We can consider everything from molecular mechanisms to public policy in the same breath" (p. 73). Herman (2006) also supports widening the focus on trauma by stating: "To me, the study of

psychological trauma is and always will be an inherently political project, because it calls attention to the consequences of oppression" (p. 83).

A wider approach is needed, encompassing psychology, sociology, politics, ethics and theology. For Becker (2006, p. 178) the research on trauma theory has reached a dead end with a missing connection between the intra-psychic and the social realm. Trauma should be considered as being more than medical symptoms and traumatised people should be more than a disposable quantity in socio-political discussions that do not take the sufferings of the affected seriously. Relationships – in the family and the wider community – are increasingly considered as a crucial factor (Figley, 2006a). Norris and Thompson (1995) emphasise this fact by analysing the difficulties a person faces when losing a close family member in a homicide. This person "has not only forever lost a loved one to murder but has likely lost his or her role vis-a-vis the homicide victim (e.g., spouse, parent), a source of social support, a sense of trust in the world, and feelings of personal control" (p. 51).

Political and social factors are important in terms of preventing traumatic occurrences beforehand or setting up new policies that increase security and personal safety after the traumatic event (Errante, 1997, p. 372). The social environment plays a crucial part in how traumatised people recover. Silencing the victim or a lack of integration can obstruct recovery (Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 170).

Especially when whole communities are traumatised, coping strategies have to be assessed for their effectiveness in dealing with larger groups. Not only the individual victim can be traumatised, but also families, schools, communities, and nations (Webb, 2004b, p. 6). Just as individuals can be damaged by trauma, so also communities can face damage and ruptures. The social bonds, the support system, and the sense of communality could be destroyed (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 24).

After a traumatic event, the victim's worldview, their trust in God, and their belief in an overall humane society, could be shattered (ibid., p. 11). It is crucial for recovery that the affected person or group, finds new explanatory models and reshapes their life narratives (Cyrulnik, 2009a, pp. 285-286).

1.2.4 Definition of trauma

The previous section gave an insight into the meaning and scope of traumatic events and trauma. As a result, in this research individual trauma will be defined as *a wound to the psyche caused by events that overwhelmed the individual's capacity to cope with the demands. That means that the brain's capacity to process the traumatic events is exceeded. Instead of the normal processing through hippocampus and cortex, the traumatic experiences remain fragmented and are not easily accessible.*

This trauma leads to bodily or mental tension which may be a factor in disease causation. According to Stamm (1999, p. 5), the threshold between major stressful events and traumatic stress, is the *demand* or *necessity* for reorientation after an individual's faith in life, in others or in himself or herself has been disorganised, re-structured or challenged. Like an earthquake can shatter houses, so too can an individual's meaning system collapse and be in need of reconstruction.

At the centre lies the individual's perception of the experiences, as Goodman (2004) explains on the topic of traumatic grief: "The cause of death does not have to meet the standard definition of a trauma for a child to experience traumatic grief. Rather, it is the child's perception of the death as traumatic that is important" (p. 78). The perception of an event as traumatic begins with a disturbed balance between the individual's personal preconditions to deal with the event and the level of threat to the individual's physical and psychological integrity (Dehner-Rau & Rau, 2007; Errante, 1997; Figley, 2008; Stamm, 1999; Webb, 2004b).

This definition makes it clear that trauma has a unique and individual component, with every victim perceiving and reacting differently in terms of intensity of the traumatic reaction according to the individual's personal and social condition. Furthermore, trauma has a component that victims of trauma experience in general, such as the physiological reactions caused by the inability of the body to cope with an event.

Consequently, coping strategies for trauma need to recognise individual differences yet be able to build on general knowledge about trauma. In addition, the above given definition highlights the idea that rational thinking for the victims of trauma is limited. Coping strategies will therefore need more than an appeal for rational behaviour. The following section analyses different responses that individuals have after traumatic events in order to find patterns of individual

response that could help in generating helpful coping strategies, even though the conceptualisation of individual behaviour always falls short of understanding the actual response of a specific individual.

1.3 Assessing the individual response to trauma

As trauma is shaped by an individual's perception of traumatic events, it consequently means that an array of factors contribute to this perception. According to Webb (2004a), the three main factors are: the type of event, the victim's personality, and the surrounding support system.

Assessing the individual's reaction to a traumatic event helps us to know more about coping strategies and increased resilience. Why is it that some go through a traumatic event without being severely wounded and others develop chronic Post-traumatic stress reactions? There is more than just one factor that has to be taken into account to assess an individual's situation. Webb writes: "We do know that a number of factors can influence an individual's responses, such as his or her past experiences with trauma and loss, age, general level of adjustment, coping styles, and qualities of resilience" (ibid., p. 23). Ruscio, Ruscio and Keane's (2002) research supports this view by stating that graded factors like "severity of the traumatic stressor, number of additional stressful life events, amount of post war social support, and strength of personal characteristics such as hardiness (...) operate alone or in tandem to produce a particular level of symptom severity after traumatic exposure" (p. 296). Brewin, Andrews, and Valentine (2000, p. 753) conducted a meta-analysis, assessing risk factors for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. The results showed that factors like trauma severity, general life stress, and adverse childhood have a significant correlation with PTSD.

Knowing this, prevents the victim from being stereotyped through pathologising on the one side or blaming for being weak, as happened to traumatised soldiers in World War I, on the other side. It was lack of knowledge that led in the beginning of the 20th century to a dramatic misjudgement of what damage horrific events could cause to the human psyche (Venzlaff, et al., 2009). Yet, not everyone who undergoes terrible events, automatically develops stress disorders (Barsalou, 2008; Knapp, 2010), which emphasises the need to prevent pathologising the victim through an over-functional reaction of society (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 94; Webb, 2004a, p. 26), and victimisation through excessive pity by the support system (Becker, 2006, p. 200;

Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 131). Careful assessment helps us to learn more about human capabilities and limits, their potential for personal growth and their need for professional care.

Webb's (2004a) categorisation into three areas of assessment – event, personality, support system – gives a comprehensive framework for the research of different factors that influence an individual's reaction to traumatic events.

1.3.1 Factors related to the nature of the traumatic event

The nature of an event has an impact on the victim's reactions. One of the most important factors is whether it is a single or a recurring traumatic event. Single events like disasters, accidents, assaults, terrorist attacks, etc. are called mono- or acute trauma, and recurring events like living in a war zone, torture, persecution for religious or political reasons, etc. are defined as chronic or ongoing trauma (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 8; Webb, 2004b, p. 7).[15]

Webb (2004b) remarks that "both types of trauma generate extreme fright and responses that, if untreated, can lead to serious disorders in both childhood and adulthood" (p. 7). Both types of trauma have a long term effect on the victims. Webb states that generally acute trauma makes the victim increasingly vulnerable to any further traumatic event, even if there is no apparent connection between the events (ibid). Solomon (2006, p. 174) emphasises that the capacity to withstand mostly declines with every traumatic experience. The individual's level of resilience diminishes constantly with every new trauma. Maercker and Rosner (2006, p. 8) believe that particularly the chronic form of trauma can lead to impaired affect regulation, self destructive and suicidal behaviour, difficulties in relating to other people, dissociative behaviour, personality disorder, and a change of the meaning system. But then again, under certain conditions, Post-traumatic growth can be possible and finding new meaning could increase the individual's resilience (Cyrulnik, 2009a; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

A second factor that shapes a person's response to trauma related to the event is the distance from the traumatic event and the extent of exposure to violence, injury or pain. Terr (2006, p. 195) shows that there are different ways a person could be affected without being in the centre of the traumatic event. She found out that traumatic events which are covered widely by the media could result in a negative and pessimistic attitude towards their own life and trigger fears, especially in children and adolescents, which could lead to a "generational attitude" (ibid, p.

[15] Lenore Terr (1994, p. 303) introduced the terminology "Type I" for the mono- or acute trauma and "Type II" for the chronic form of trauma, but these terms are not commonly used anymore (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 8).

194). Webb (2004b, p. 8) adds that the media brings details of the traumatic events into the homes of the observers and this could profoundly affect them. That means proximity can not only be geographical but also emotional. As Webb notes, there is a difference between a family member of someone living in an affected area watching the news reports and someone who has no closely related persons on or near the site seeing those reports (ibid, p. 7).

In addition to distant trauma, in some cases vicarious traumatisation (VT) (McCann & Pearlman, 1990) and compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress (STS)[16] could develop as a traumatic event related reaction.[17] These especially affect rescue workers, counsellors, mental health professionals, and others when they deal with dead, injured, or traumatised people. Also the family members of the victims could suffer from compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995). Figley (2002, 1995) describes this kind of trauma as a mirroring or contagion effect (1995, p. 1) and defines it "as a state of tension and preoccupation with the traumatised patients by re-experiencing the traumatic events, avoidance/numbing of reminders, persistent arousal (e.g., anxiety) associated with the patient" (2002, p. 1435). As such, this secondary traumatic stress disorder has symptoms nearly identical to the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (ibid.).

Further factors that have an impact on the individual's response to trauma are the nature of losses, deaths and destruction and the qualification of the event as random/act of God or deliberate/human made (Webb, 2004b, pp. 8-10). Weisaeth and Eitinger (1993) suggest three categories of trauma: (1) " (...) the danger trauma, that is, the overwhelming threat of life; (2) the loss trauma, that is, the death of close ones, often witnessed by the helpless victim; and (3) (...) the responsibility trauma, that is, the attack on one's psychological self" (1993, p. 69).

Webb (2004b, p. 9) describes how the possible reactions to these three categories could involve anxiety and fear after danger traumas, grief and mourning after loss traumas and guilt following responsibility traumas. The individual response can be even more dramatic when events were caused deliberately. All sorts of trauma can lead to the conclusion that the world is

[16] The term "vicarious traumatisation" is often used synonymously with "compassion fatigue" or "secondary traumatic stress". Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995), however, make a distinction by emphasising that the secondary traumatisation "focuses primarily on the symptoms, while the vicarious-traumatization approach focuses on the individual as a whole, placing observable symptoms in the larger context of human adaption and quest for meaning" (p. 153). Baird and Kracen (2006) explain that vicarious traumatisation (VT) "refers to harmful changes that occur in professionals' views of themselves, others, and the world as a result of exposure to graphic and/or traumatic material. VT can be seen as a normal response to ongoing challenges to a helper's beliefs and values but can result in decreased motivation, efficacy, and empathy. Secondary traumatic stress (STS) (...) refers to a syndrome among professional helpers that mimics post-traumatic stress disorder and occurs as a result of exposure to the traumatic experiences of others" (p. 182).

[17] Research conducted by Devilly, Wright and Varker (2009) suggest that the phenomena of VT and compassion fatigue/STS should not be overestimated, as distress among therapists could mainly be due to "workplace burnout, being new to the profession, and shifts in beliefs about one's safety" (p. 384). Consequently Devilly et al. recommend further longitudinal research (ibid.).

not a trustworthy place, but it can be “particularly compelling after a deliberately inflicted trauma” (ibid., p. 11).

1.3.2 Factors affecting individual responses

As the nature of the traumatic event has an effect on the individual’s response, so have personal preconditions. Age and the cognitive level, temperamental characteristics, ethnicity, prior experiences of trauma and a general coping style affect the reactions to trauma (C. R. Brewin, et al., 2000; Webb, 2004b).

These personal preconditions are part of the overall level of resilience. Apfel and Simon (2000) define resilience as “the capacity to survive violence and loss, and moreover to have flexibility of response over the course of a life time. The inner experience of such behavioural flexibility includes a sense of agency and a sense of capacity to choose – among courses of action and among conflicting moral values” (p. 103). Alternatively, in an analogy to the material sciences, Barnhart and Steinmetz (1999) define resilience as “the physical property of a material that can return to its original shape or position after deformation that does not exceed its elastic limits’’ (cited in Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 153). This definition has a close link to the origin of the term “resilience”, which is Latin (*resilio*) for “to bounce back” (Pertsch, 1990). Yet unlike materials, humans cannot regain the original status. Development and growth are always part of resilience (Sedmak, 2010). Therefore Bodenhamer (2006) defines resilience as “bouncing-back plus” (p. 5). Apfel and Simon (2000) describe an individual’s resilience as having the capacity to “extract human warmth and loving kindness in the most dire of circumstances”, showing “curiosity and intellectual mastery”, being active rather than passive, and being able to defend against “overwhelming anxiety or depression” (pp. 125-126). A high level of resilience allows a victim to draw strength from memories of people who had a positive impact on their life and could serve as good examples in difficult times. Resilient persons have a sense of purpose and empowerment, they have the ability to help others, and have a vision of reconstructing community and an overall moral order (ibid.). Resilience includes the “ability to knit together a feeling of selfhood” (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 19). Resilience is the “ability to succeed, to live and to develop in a positive and socially acceptable way, despite the stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of negative outcome” (Vanistendael cited in: Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 5).

There has been a recent discussion about whether resilience must be described in terms of the absence of psychopathology (e. g. PTSD) or if these are separate entities. Levine, Laufer, Stein, Hamama-Raz, and Solomon, (2009) prefer, for clarity reasons, to define resilience as a "resistance to PTSD following adversity" (p. 283). Shalev and Errera (2008) and Yehuda and Flory (2007) highlight the need for a broader definition of resilience that would include a variety of aspects into the assessment of a person's resilience. Shalev and Errera (2008, p. 151) argue that even patients with PTSD can have areas in their lives that function even under difficult circumstances: marriage, family life, and the workplaces. Therefore resilience and mental disorders should be seen as independent features.

In any case, some traumatised people recover more easily than others. There are personal factors that influence the level of resilience. It is not clear whether someone is born with these higher levels or if it is rather something that develops mainly after exposure to trauma and when being forced to cope with adversities (Yehuda & Flory, 2007, p. 438). Studies have shown that individuals with an insecure and abusive childhood and prior traumatic experiences are more likely to have diminished levels of resilience (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 7). In addition, intelligence, education, and good mentorship influence the outcome of a person's reaction to traumatic events (Masten, 2001, p. 231; Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 155). Also, the size of the hippocampus can be linked to the level of resilience (Yehuda & Flory, 2007, p. 442). Patterns of self-pity, self-victimisation and self-depreciation could increase the negative emotions and thus intensify the psychological suffering (Peres, et al., 2007, p. 346).

Masten (2009, p. 29) lists factors (among others) that can provide a favourable basis for an individual's resilient response to traumatic events:

- positive attachment bonds with caregivers;
- positive relationships with other nurturing and competent adults;
- intellectual skills;
- positive self-perceptions, self-efficacy;
- faith, hope, and a sense of meaning in life;
- communities with positive services and supports for families and children; and,
- cultures that provide positive standards, rituals, relationships, and supports.

Masten concludes that the

> "pervasiveness of these predictors of resilience suggests that there are fundamental protective systems for human adaptation and development that, when operating

normally, afford considerable capacity for resilience in the face of many kinds of adversities. In other words, resilience does not require extraordinary resources in most cases, but instead is the result of what might be called 'ordinary magic'. It arises naturally from the interaction of basic adaptive systems that foster and protect human development" (ibid., p. 30).

Thus, resilience does not result from "rare and special qualities" but from "normative human resources", encompassing mind and body as well as the relationships in the family and the wider community (2001, p. 227). Masten believes: "If those systems are protected and in good working order, development is robust even in the face of severe adversity. If these major systems are impaired, antecedent or consequent to adversity, then the risk for developmental problems is much greater, particularly if the environment hazards are prolonged" (ibid.). Sedmak (2012) agrees that Masten's basic systems are crucial factors for resilience. Being critical of long lists of resilience factors, however, Sedmak stresses three main categories that comprise these basic systems: having a sense of direction, a sense of control, and a social sense within a healthy social environment. If these senses are strongly developed, resilience is high.

The diagram below depicts resilience as a transient decline and a return to basic functioning. Shalev and Errera (2008) explain that "the absence of an initial decline is defined as 'stress resistance'. A delayed return to a previous level of functioning bears the name 'protracted recovery'. The failure trajectory leads to an irreversible negative change. Attrition represents good initial adaptation followed by progressive exhaustion and decline" (p. 154).

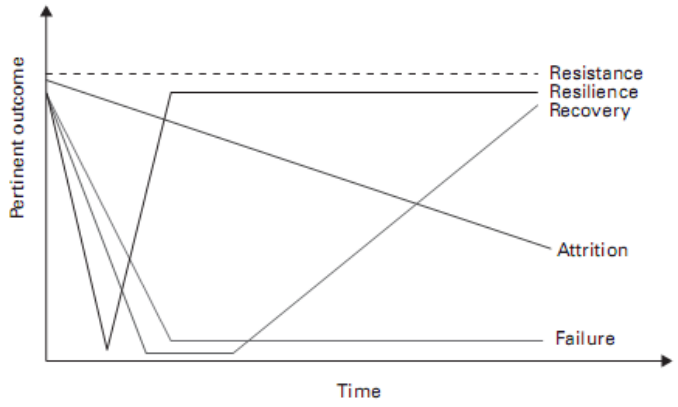

Figure 1-1 The resilience trajectory (Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 154)[18]

[18] Adapted from (Layne, Warren, Watson, & Shalev, 2007)

However, even if an individual fails to recover and suffers from PTSD, a return to basic functioning is possible with proper treatment. This could finally result in an increased resilience. It is possible to learn and to grow through suffering.

This also applies to the resilience trajectory. The return to basic functioning does not mean a return to the status quo. Sedmak notes that "coping in a crisis in the sense of resilient behaviour does not mean that the situation will be overcome quickly, even less, that the original state will be restored" (2010, p. 3)[19].

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) introduced the concept of "Post-traumatic growth", separating resilience from personal development after stressful events. They argue that resilience consists of the ability to recover quickly after stress without major impairment to daily life. In contrast to this they define Post-traumatic growth as "a change in people that goes beyond an ability to resist and not be damaged by highly stressful circumstances" (p. 4).

This may hold for stress reactions below the level of traumatic stress. Traumatic stress, as defined earlier, is an overwhelming experience that leads to the need for reorientation after an individual's faith in life, in others or in oneself has been disorganised, re-structured or challenged. The resilient reaction to traumatic events therefore inevitably comprises the necessity for growth. If an event is affecting a person in such a way that he or she can carry on with normal life or if there is no need for reorientation, the threshold of traumatic stress has not been reached.

Sedmak (2010) argues that "resilience is the ability to grow in and through a crisis and not to return to the point of origin. Resilience therefore includes the capability of development. Resilient people are not those who stand still in the face of adverse winds (which is more likely the definition for 'resistance'), but those who walk in the face of a storm, possibly in a new direction" (p. 3)[20].

Thus, when dealing with trauma, I suggest regarding the concept of Post-traumatic growth as a part of the concept of resilience. Transformation and a "qualitative change in functioning" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 4) are key characteristics of resilient reactions after trauma.

[19] „Die Bewältigung einer Krise im Sinne resilienten Verhaltens heißt gerade nicht, dass die Situation möglichst rasch abgebaut wird und schon gar nicht, dass der Ursprungszustand hergestellt wird."
[20] „Resilienz ist die Fähigkeit, in einer Krise und durch eine Krise zu wachsen, also nicht an einen Ausgangspunkt zurückzukehren. Damit ist Resilienz auch verbunden mit Entwicklungsfähigkeit. Resiliente Menschen sind nicht die, die angesichts des Gegenwindes stehen bleiben (vielleicht ein Verständnis von ‚Resistenz'), sondern diejenigen, die angesichts eines Sturms gehen, wenn auch vielleicht in eine neue Richtung."

Bodenhamer (2006) notes that resilience is “the capacity of a system, community or society (...) to adapt, by changing or resisting in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure [and] the capacity of a community to grow through disasters” (p. 5).

Resilience results out of reworking the belief system. It is like “a sweater knitted from developmental, emotional and social strands of wool” (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 51). Cyrulnik (2009a) believes that coping is possible even if not all preconditions are favourable: “We might feel that, if a single stitch is dropped, everything will unravel, but in fact, if just one stitch holds, we can start all over again” (p. 13). He emphasises: “Survival is possible and (...) the future is not so bleak” (p. 15). New coping styles can be learned (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 13; Dass-Brailsford, 2010b, p. 58). The saying “early problems, lasting effects” will only become true if an individual’s surroundings turn the stories of the early problems “into narratives that never change” (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 127). Society abandons traumatised people to their desolate fate if it thinks that a person’s destiny is inevitable, which could become a self-fulfilling prophecy (ibid., p. 17).

1.3.3 Factors in the support system

When assessing the individual’s response to traumatic events, the social environment or the support system has major impact affecting the senses of control and direction as well as the social sense. As indicated before, good education and good mentorship are examples of how the influence of the support system increases the level of a person’s resilience. Culture and the community, family, school, work, friends, and religion form the context that shapes the responses to traumatic events (Webb, 2004a).

1.3.3.1 Macrosystem: culture and community

A community’s beliefs, morals, values, customs, world view, behaviours, and communication styles form a specific culture. They further a group’s cohesion, as its members are expected to conform with the given rules (Webb, 2004a, p. 36). These rules could either support or complicate a recovery process from trauma. In general, a common culture, the sense of belonging and familiarity, everyday routines, and social conventions help to reduce anxieties (Errante, 1997, p. 377; Norris & Thompson, 1995, p. 59; Robben, 2000, p. 21). Research on migrants with traumatic experiences shows the difficulties that arise when familiar surroundings are missing. Cyrulnik (2009a) states that “the personal identity of a migrant is shattered when the social body surrounding him becomes incoherent, when ties are loosened and when events

lose their meaning" (pp. 59-60). But when migrants bring pieces of their old world with them, these could serve as markers from the past to give orientation (p. 60).

However, culture could also become an impediment to recovery. Some cultures, for instance, regard consulting a health professional or even admitting to be suffering from past events as a weakness and a source of shame. The symptoms of trauma then have to be hidden, which could aggravate the health situation (Webb, 2004a, p. 36).

Some cultures have high regard for helping people in need. On the one hand this could foster a comprehensive support system which addresses the needs of the traumatised. On the other hand this could lead to an over-functional behaviour and thus weaken the victims' resilience (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 94). Cyrulnik (2009a) writes: "We love victims as long as they remain wretched because it makes us feel good when we help" (p. 75). And he adds: "When social discourse says of him, 'He's a poor orphan.' He is finished. (...) Society puts an additional psychosocial obstacle in the path of his development" (ibid., p. 131). In a similar way, researchers criticise the overemphasis on "interventions" by experts along with the tendency to dramatise, pathologise, and catastrophise (Becker, 2006, p. 200; Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 166).

Societies tend to have their own agenda when dealing with victims of trauma. The victims' story is used to support social myths for the society's own purposes. Stories are checked for their compliance with these social myths. As a result, victims are either silenced, if the stories are not in line with the myths, or brought on stage "so that the group's myth can feed on the story of [the] suffering" (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 209).

After the Vietnam War, the homecoming soldiers found a mainly hostile environment. American society was overwhelmed by the high numbers of casualties and the feeling of being defeated in a senseless war. In contrast to this, Gulf War veterans were welcomed as heroes (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 21). Robben and Suárez-Orozco (2000) attribute a detrimental effect on trauma recovery to the first type of reception: "Such different circumstances cannot but have an effect on the recovery of the traumatised war veterans" (p. 21).

During the first years after the Holocaust many survivors encountered a complete disinterest regarding their experiences by the Israeli society as no one could bear to hear their horrible stories (Danieli, 2006, p. 34). Danieli (2006) coined this behaviour "conspiracy of silence" (p.

35), where the survivors opted ultimately for silence, after not being heard. Fortunately this had changed in the course of time (ibid., p. 36).

The culture and the society's reactions to traumatic events have a significant impact on trauma recovery. It may be necessary to find out, before treating a patient, which impediments to treatment exist within a culture. Sometimes "we are treating the wrong patient: if we want the wounded to feel less pain, we must treat not them but our culture" (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 263).

1.3.3.2 Microsystem: family, friends, peer, school, work

As the culture and the surrounding society have an impact on responses to traumatic events, so also do the family and close relationships. A family is the source of basic trust that provides security. This relationship of trust develops as early as the child's first year and shapes its style of attachment. Following Bowlby's attachment theory, Masten and Obradovic (2008) conclude: "For young children, adaptation and the potential for resilience depend primarily on the quality of their early relationships with parent figures" (p. 7). Attachment figures provide a secure base in the face of danger, and allow the confident exploration of the world in relaxed times (ibid.). But not only children draw their strength from family relations. Parents also find separation from their children extremely stressful (ibid., p. 8) and the inability to safeguard them can be traumatic (Robben, 2000, p. 74).

Insecure attachments and traumatised parents can exacerbate the consequences of traumatic events. This insight is of special importance as 97.5 per cent of acts of violence happen in the family (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 111), which leaves children with an environment of shattered basic trust and a desperate need for trustworthy attachment figures.

Families are also the places where trauma is most easily transmitted (Bettelheim, 1984; Boyd, et al., 2010; Cyrulnik, 2009b; Danieli, 1998). Traumatised parents can pass on their anxieties, even if they resolve not to tell their children about their traumatic history. Cyrulnik (2009a) makes a link between transgenerational transmission and society's responses to the trauma:

> "Almost all (...) wounded parents who had been reduced to silence by a culture that could not understand their tragedy passed on their anxiogenic secrets. And almost all the wounded parents who were forced to talk about it by a culture that exploited their sufferings passed on their traumatic anxiety" (pp. 261-262).

Positive relationships and attachment bonds with caregivers such as family or other competent persons help to confront trauma. Webb (2004a) stresses that “a return to the regular routine of school or work helps people assume some control over their lives as they begin to put the traumatic event in the past” (p. 38). Maintaining relationships towards the extended family, friends, peers, and colleagues, builds a network of trust and gives the opportunity for mutual support (ibid.).

1.3.3.3 Religion/ spirituality

Religious communities represent a special form of support system and spirituality is an important factor in the individual’s response to trauma. Numerous studies have shown a positive connection between religious involvement and mental health (Greeff & Loubser, 2008, p. 290; Peres, et al., 2007, p. 347). It is believed that those with a deep spiritual foundation “are better able to cope and respond to a vast array of devastating change” (McCombs, 2010, p. 134).

Religion can be seen as a “protective factor in its own right” because of the “sense of belonging” in a religious community and the possibility of social support (Loewenthal cited in Greeff & Loubser, 2008, p. 290). Peres et al. (2007) state that “religious beliefs and practices may reduce loss of control and helplessness, provide a cognitive framework that can decrease suffering, and strengthen one’s purpose and meaning in the face of trauma” (pp. 347-348). Spirituality may be key to reframing experiences and shaping future behaviour (ibid., p. 346).

Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, and Hahn (2004, p. 717) defined, in a longitudinal study on religious coping among medically ill elderly people, several religious coping methods that had either a positive or a negative influence. Among those with positive coping effects are benevolent reappraisal (finding a lesson from God in the event); seeking spiritual support (searching for comfort and reassurance through God’s love and care); active religious surrender (giving up control and surrendering it to God); seeking spiritual connection (thinking about how life is part of a larger picture); forgiveness (help in shifting from anger to peace, and seeking religious direction).

From a Christian viewpoint these coping methods are strongly encouraged by biblical teaching. Christian doctrine aims at giving believers hope through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ

without whom the world would be death and darkness[21] (Jüngel, 1998, p. 11). The Bible describes the church as a body that supports the suffering members (Rm 12:4; 1 Cor 12:12).

This core value of mutual support provides meaningful social roles through the act of helping which increases a sense of personal control. Believers place God's love at the centre of their actions and try to fulfil a God given purpose (Crawford, O'Dougherty Wright, & Masten, 2006, p. 363).

From a family systems perspective, Walsh (2009) emphasises that "there is a mutual influence between spirituality and the family: meaningful spiritual beliefs and practices can strengthen families and their members; in turn, their shared spiritual experiences strengthen members' faith" (p. 19). The shared beliefs transcend the limits of a family's capabilities and help to accept inevitable losses and to be open for new perspectives (ibid.).

Greef and Loubser (2008) found out from research with Xhosa families in South Africa that strong spiritual foundation helped these families to "stand strong and bounce back" (p. 300). Also Crawford et al. (2006, p. 359) noted that married couples who attend church regularly are less likely to divorce. People with a religious framework could be better able to cope with stress because they wish to comply with certain transcendent goals and therefore engage in practicing virtues like compassion, forgiveness, and hope (ibid., p. 361).

Yet spirituality in itself is no guarantee for resilience. Pargament et al. (2004) found out that some religious coping methods could have a detrimental effect on coping. These methods are, for example, defining the stressor as a punishment from God, passive waiting for God to intervene, or the opposite, to seek control through individual initiative without trusting God for help, and avoiding advice that is inconsistent with one's faith. The result was a decline "in spiritual outcome and quality of life, increases in depressed mood and declines in independence in daily activities" (ibid., p. 726). In order to counteract these attitudes, Crawford et al. (2006, p. 363) suggests that congregations may strengthen their trust in a loving and powerful God, their sense of self worth, and their belief that life has a meaningful purpose to fulfil.

[21] Martin Luther (1537) states about the article of justification: "Without this article the world is utter death and darkness" ("Sine hoc articulo mundus est plane mors et tenebrae").

1.4 Conclusion

It has been shown, that the individual response to trauma is diverse and depends on numerous factors. Some are externally influenced, like the surrounding societies' reactions and the nature of the traumatic event. Other internal factors lie within a victim's personal preconditions and the individual level of resilience, which are shaped by education, family, and spirituality. However, it became clear that it is possible to find several starting points that could help in a coping process. In particular the support system could be influential in providing an environment that fosters resilience. Yet it also became clear that there are no quick fixes for trauma. Trauma, as earlier defined, is a wound to the psyche caused by events that overwhelmed the individual's capacity to cope with the demands, fragmenting experiences and making them inaccessible. These fragmentations have to be put together again (Peichl, 2009) which could amount to a life-long endeavour (Unckel, 2009). Yet, there is hope that current and future research may increase our understanding of how to cope with trauma. The overview of the development of the field and its latest findings show a considerable increase in knowledge. Peichl (2009) is convinced that there is significant movement in this area and that researchers are open to new approaches and new insights into how to deal with individual trauma. The second chapter now shifts the focus from the individual to traumatised communities.

Chapter 2 Traumatised communities

Clinicians tend to view trauma from the perspective of the individual. Yet, as mentioned before, it is likely that groups are being traumatised: families, schools, communities, and even nations (Webb, 2004b, p. 6). It is likely, however, that individual trauma has an effect on the community. Trauma recovery and reorientation of the victims' lives is time consuming and depends on the support of close family, friends, and the community. As a result, the supporters are confronted with the traumatic events experienced by the victim that could then trigger traumatic communal reactions. Thus, community trauma is not exclusively the result of mass trauma, which Webb (2004b) defines as a "trauma that occurs as a result of a frightening, potentially life-threatening event that is experienced by a large number of people simultaneously" (p. 5). Community trauma can be a consequence of mass trauma but can also have its onset in an individual's trauma sparking community trauma. The individual's experiences could have repercussions on the surroundings and affect them in a traumatic way. Volkan (2006) states that traumatic events can also be "felt by all those who belong to the same large-group identity" (p. 122), even if they have not been affected directly by those events. In this way the traumatised individual affects the surrounding community and a community's patterns of coping have repercussions on the coping strategies of the individual. Particularly, close relatives can be traumatised, as Cyrulnik (2009b) observes, because it is "not the traumatic event that is transmitted and that damages the close relative but its representation" (p. 158). It is even possible that those who experienced traumatic events are less affected than close family members. Cyrulnik mentions that some of the people who were caught up in a terrorist attack in Paris in 1996 showed no signs of trauma, however their partners suffered from PTSD. Likewise, UN-Soldiers based in Beirut during the war in Lebanon were more severely affected than the fighters (ibid.). Cyrulnik concludes that

> "in some cases, someone who is injured but has a lot of support can recover from the trauma more easily than the close relative who was thought to be protected, and who was left to face the horrors of what he imagined" (ibid.).

But each experience of trauma development has different signs and symptoms (Audergon, 2005; Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 159).

Community trauma is, therefore, not just the sum of traumatised individuals. Individual trauma and community trauma are interconnected and should not be separated. In this respect it is

crucial to be aware of the danger of the "fallacy of composition" – to draw conclusions about a group based on findings about one individual (cf. Rowe, 1962)[22]. Although each individual has to work through his or her own trauma, the dynamics of a group need to be taken into account separately and require their own approach. The rupture of social bonds and the destruction of relationships can damage a community's ability to support each other in the aftermath of traumatic events (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 24). War and organised violence can damage social and cultural institutions and can have long term psychosocial consequences for whole societies (Summerfield, 1995, p. 22). Solomon (2003) adds that

> "traumatic experiences (...) take a cultural and societal toll, and policy makers must address the psychosocial consequences for communities as well for individuals. Like individuals, social organisations and cultural groups may become distressed and disintegrate under the pressure of extreme and persistent exposure to traumatic experience" (p. 9).

Audergon (2004) emphasises that the "dynamics of trauma have collective dimensions that influence the course of global history" (p. 16). Traumatic events in communities shape the collective memory[23] of a group. These events become deeply ingrained into a community's view of history and influence its identity and future expectations (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 24) and go far beyond the personal context, extending to a context that is shaped by culture, society, norms and values (Kleber, Figley, & Gersons, 1995, p. 3).

In order to overcome community trauma, issues of historical remembrance and truth finding as well as the problem of intergenerational transmission have to be addressed (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 24). The treatment of traumatised individuals has to deal with communal and political issues. In the end, the ability of a community to heal is important for the healing process of the individual (Audergon, 2004, p. 16; Boyd, et al., 2010, p. 152).

Unfortunately there is no specific set of symptoms or a description of a syndrome to use for recognising community trauma, a "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder" on the communal level (Barsalou, 2008, p. 29). But the criticism that PTSD serves primarily as a western model of understanding trauma shows that even a disorder which can be clearly diagnosed has its limits

[22] It is important to note that not all conclusions about a group based on its parts are fallacies of composition (Rowe, 1962) and inductive reasoning could lead to highly probable assumptions (Glass & Hall, 2008).
[23] Hirst and Manier (2008) provide a useful working definition of "collective memory" defining it "as shared individual memories that shape collective identity" (p. 196).

and needs cultural adaptation (Becker, 2006; Clancy & Hamber, 2008; Wessells, 2008). Summerfield (1995) notes that

> "psychiatric models like PTSD (...) have inherent limitations in capturing the complex ways in which individuals, communities, and, indeed, whole societies register massive trauma, socialize their grief, and reconstitute meaningful existence. Traumatic experience, and the search for meaning which it triggers, must be understood in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her society, with outcomes influenced by cultural, social, and political forces (which themselves evolve over time)" (pp. 27-28).

Although it is difficult to appraise a community's traumatic state by using "facts and figures", latest research has provided solid evidence about how traumatic events influence communities and whole societies and how dealing with community trauma helps the individual to recover.

2.1 Literature review

When reviewing the literature on community trauma, it appears that research in this specific field is relatively new. Of course, there are many neighbouring fields concerned with peacebuilding in conflict-stricken areas and rebuilding efforts where disasters have occurred. The fields of research share a common desire to support societies after traumatising events so that they may regain the ability to provide peaceful communities and an environment that fosters development. Barry Hart's (2008b, p. ix) *Peacebuilding Wheel* names the issues: education, justice, conflict transformation, humanitarian assistance and development, and security as complementary topics to trauma healing. Considering these neighbouring fields of research, a vast array of literature has been produced during the last decades. Yet the field of traumatised communities and the effects that come along with trauma have been researched to a much lesser extent.

A growing number of researchers focused on the cultural implications of trauma and its effects on trauma responses and coping strategies (Luhrmann, 2000; Marsella, Johnson, Watson, & Gryczynski, 2008; Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000). This includes a critique of using solely western psychological approaches in confronting trauma (Becker, 2006; Clancy & Hamber, 2008; Wessells, 2008).

Robben (2000) highlights in his research on Argentina the ruptures of community life after violence and how perpetrators deliberately inflict trauma to destabilise families and groups. He emphasises the role of trust in the cohesion of societies. Basic trust as a part of the personal constitution can "disintegrate beyond recovery after undergoing traumatic experiences" (p. 74) and thus have a severe impact on communities. Audergon (2005, pp. 281-285) compares this impact on communities with the symptoms for PTSD and finds similarities on a communal scale: helplessness, recurrent distressing recollections of the event, reactivity to any issue that relates to the original event, avoidance, trying to avoid the ghosts of the past, etc.

Yael Danieli's (1998, 2006, 2007) work on transgenerational transmission helps to demonstrate how trauma could be passed on across generations and thus not only provides a better understanding of an individual's trauma and its effects but also gives an insight into the influence of trauma on families and societies.

This special concern for transgenerational effects on families, leads Webb (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) to focus on children and their families after mass trauma analysing the factors that could lead to traumatisation. She emphasises that children and families who are exposed to traumatic events are fragile and need special attention through methods that ease their anxiety.

The whole field of crisis and disaster counselling makes a considerable contribution to understanding community trauma. Dass-Brailsford (2010a) stresses the importance of historical and contextual factors that are crucial for the planning of disaster responses. In her analysis of the situation after Hurricane Katrina, she points out the importance of taking previous transgenerational trauma into account when responding to the disaster. Minority groups who suffered discrimination and racism are especially vulnerable to additional traumatisation.

Fierke's (2004) approach of asking whether "widespread social suffering may have a social and political expression that is larger than the sum of traumatised or bereaved individuals" (p. 471) helps to explain how community trauma is influenced by a loss of agency and the sense of helplessness. A society's reaction to humiliation can lead to the desire for revenge and retaliation and result in further violence.

One of the most renowned researchers of community trauma is Vamik Volkan (1997, 2004, 2006). The concept of *chosen trauma/chosen glory* and his studies on conflict, identity and trauma have been most influential. Volkan (1997) describes this concept as a

> "collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ancestors. It is, of course, more than a simple recollection; it is a shared mental representation of the event, which includes realistic information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defences against unacceptable thoughts. (...) [T]he word *chosen* fittingly reflects a large group's unconsciously defining its identity by the transgenerational transmission of injured selves infused with the memory of the ancestors' trauma" (p. 48).

In the same way as a collective memory of a tragedy can lead to a chosen trauma, the memory of victory could serve as the onset for a chosen glory. The memories of the incident provide strength and pride and shape the collective identity (ibid., p. 81). In this respect, Volkan's research on the Greek-Turkish conflict and the Bosnian War has been significant in understanding long lasting enmity and trauma that is passed on over generations (Volkan, 1996, 2006; Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1994).

In the Latin American context Martín-Baró was influential in understanding the psychosocial consequences of war. This Jesuit Priest, who was murdered by El Salvadorian military, emphasised that trauma affects not only the individual person but also a community. In dealing with the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s, he was convinced that "the problem of mental health (...) has to be located in the historical context in which every individual builds and realizes his existence within a web of interwoven relationships"[24] (1990, p. 4). The traumatic reactions are influenced by relational systems and the historical context of a community of which the individual is just a part (Anckermann et al., 2005, p. 138; Martín-Baró, 1988, p. 123). In El Salvador he noticed a deliberate evocation of social polarisation, intentional obstruction of the truth and a militarisation of the country leading to dehumanisation of certain sections of the population which, as he argues, lead to the development of trauma (1988, p. 123). Martín-Baró suggests that in order to overcome trauma, it will be necessary to address the social fabric of a community (ibid.) because, as Anckermann et al. (2005) remark, "social relationships may multiply and sustain the traumatic stress on the community level, leading to individual experiences of suffering from traumatic stress" (p. 138).

Another approach to community trauma is suggested by Lisa Schirch (2008). She argues that trauma has an impact on a community's identity and security. Her challenging appraisal of the

[24] "El problema de la salud mental (...) debe ubicarse en el contexto histórico en donde cada individuo elabora y realiza su existencia en las telarañas de las relaciones sociales."

US-government's reactions to terrorism shows how important it is for leaders to assess their own traumatic state. Schirch points out that trauma could lead to aggressive leadership and a uni-dimensional and simplistic perception of an enemy. This in turn shapes a whole society's identity and awareness of that enemy. As a result, feeling of security deteriorates and further traumatic events are envisaged. Lisa Schirch and her colleagues[25] developed a trauma cycle model based on Botcharova's model "Seven Steps Toward Revenge" (2001, p. 291), which describes how trauma and violence perpetuate themselves and how an individual's or a society's identity is shaped by these things (Schirch, 2008; C. Yoder, 2005; Zehr, 2008). Schirch (2008) suggests that mass media ought to play a crucial role in breaking the trauma cycle and fostering reconciliation. Also rituals and symbols are important to achieve "human security" (p. 97), and focus on the threats that individuals and communities face rather than on "state or national business interests" (ibid.2008).

2.2 The concept of community trauma – the cycle of trauma

Traumatic events may initiate reactions that lead to a cycle of suffering and violence, and unless challenging choices are made to break the cycle, healing cannot take place. This cycle of trauma affects individuals as well as whole societies after the experience of disasters or violence – be it overt or structural (Kantowitz & Çelik, 2009, p. 180; Schirch, 2008, p. 85). A cycle of community trauma is often characterised by an environment of ongoing dysfunction and chaos (Kantowitz & Çelik, 2009, p. 180).

The trauma cycle shown below explains how victims become aggressors and how traumatised people "respond aggressively to threats with short-term revenge-based strategies" (Schirch, 2008, p. 85; cf. C. Yoder, 2005). Schirch (2008) notes: "A cycle of violence can result, where people act out their sense of trauma on each other. As acts of violence are perpetrated in response to trauma, the cycle of trauma is continued" (p. 85).

The cycle is divided into two parts. The first part (survivor/victim cycle) focuses on the suffering of the victims, fully acknowledging the pain they experienced because of the traumatic events. The second part of the cycle (enemy/aggressor cycle) describes behaviours resulting from revenge-based choices and a self-definition which is strongly related to the enemy leading to a "negative identity", i.e. defining oneself by who one is not (ibid., p. 86).

[25] Carolyn Yoder, Nancy Good Sider, Barry Hart, and Jayne Docherty at Eastern Mennonite University, VA, USA.

In the following detailed discussion of the various stages of the trauma cycle, the focus will be on community trauma.

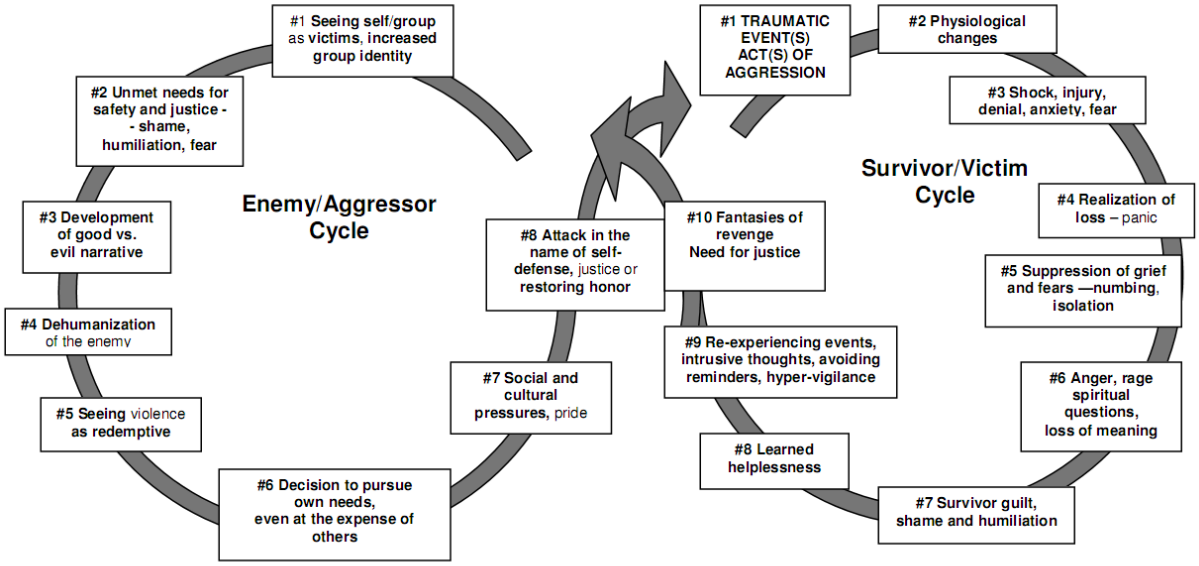

Figure 2-1 The cycle of trauma (C. Yoder, 2005, p. 38; Zehr, 2008, p. 11)[26]

2.2.1 Survivor/ victim cycle

The onset of the trauma cycle is a traumatic event that hits a community. As mentioned above, violence disrupts life. Social bonds are torn apart, and unspeakable suffering descends upon a community. Schirch emphasises that "the cycle of trauma and victimization is usually unique to each person or group, it is often characterized by periods of shock, denial, shame and humiliation, loss of meaning, feelings of helplessness, anger and the suppression of grief and fears" (ibid., p. 85).

Threat of fundamental social values and dealing with losses:

While the individual undergoes physiological changes in the brain, a community's fundamental social values are threatened as well as its welfare and survival (Audergon, 2005, p. 281). Basic trust and security have been destroyed, in some instances beyond repair (Robben, 2000, p. 74). Erikson (1972) describes community trauma as a "blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality"

[26] This diagram was developed by Carolyn Yoder, Nancy Good Sider, Barry Hart, Lisa Schirch and Jayne Docherty. The victim cycle is adapted from Olga Botcharova (2001).

(p. 146). Relationships that were built on trust are shattered. Fierke (2004) believes that when a child is abused by a parent the traumatisation occurs “first and foremost by the betrayal and loss of any safety” (p. 489).

At a certain stage, people in a community begin to realise their losses. A sense of helplessness and loss of agency trigger anger and rage. Fierke remarks: “The shock of trauma resides not only in physical disaster, but in loss of control and powerlessness vis-à-vis others” (ibid., p. 487). This helplessness could even develop into a behavioural pattern that lasts a long time after the threat has ceased. As a result people function in survival mode, “making decisions based on meeting basic needs”, in disregard of a long-term view of community development (Kantowitz & Riak, 2008, p. 6).

Re-experiencing events:

Just as an individual can have flashbacks triggered by certain events, a traumatic event can be actualised in a community with “strong affects, flashbacks and visceral responses” (Audergon, 2005, p. 282) by touching hot spots when talking or debating about an issue (ibid.). After the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, an alert system indicated the current level of threat. Schirch (2008) notes that observations showed that raising the level of threat served “as a trigger to remind Americans of their feelings on September 11, 2001. In response, their heartbeat may race, they may begin to perspire” (p. 88). These painful feelings could lead to the “desire for revenge or acts of violence” (ibid., p. 85).

Fantasies of revenge, need for justice:

Retaliation and revenge are attempts to alleviate trauma. Audergon (2004) names accountability “in the form of paying the price, settling the score” as an essential motivation for revenge (p. 24). When those responsible refuse accountability, the urge for revenge is increased (ibid.).

Revenge can also be motivated by the wish to end the state of helplessness, victimhood and oppression. Causing pain to others gives temporary relief (ibid.). Audergon names a third motivation for revenge: “the desire for others to know how it feels to be hurt and humiliated and for the pain to be included in community. This may be accompanied by a belief that if only the oppressors knew what it was really like they might wake up and change” (ibid.).

If the pain and outrage is not acknowledged, the urge for revenge remains and the danger increases that history will repeat itself because of the public desire to retaliate (ibid.). Re-enactment and new violence makes the victim become an aggressor.

2.2.2 Enemy/aggressor cycle

This leads to the second part of the trauma cycle, which explains how traumatised communities develop a new sense of identity that sets them in opposition to the enemy. Narratives that keep the suffering alive are cultivated. Ultimately, the cycle of trauma leads to new violence – towards the enemy or towards oneself as self-castigation (Luhrmann, 2000).

Although this cycle seems to be primarily relevant for deliberately inflicted trauma, disasters could have similar reactions. Communities may feel the need to hold someone accountable for the disaster, someone to be blamed for not taking enough precautions (C. Yoder, 2005, p. 49).

Identity and "chosen trauma":

Community trauma has to take large group identity into account. Volkan (2010) compares large group identity with a tent, "that allows to share a sense of sameness with others under the same large-group tent" (p. 48). He argues that each large group has its own specific identity markers, among others the large group's real and fantasised historical events (ibid.).

When the large-group's identity is threatened, large-group regression[27] takes place, reactivating sometimes centuries-old shared historical mental representations. As mentioned above, Volkan coined these representations "chosen glories" or "chosen traumas" (ibid., p. 50).

A chosen trauma is characterised by the perceived helplessness, sense of lack of control and shame of the sufferers (Kantowitz & Riak, 2008, p. 7; Luhrmann, 2000). Luhrmann (2000) argues that

> "the mark of collective trauma is the sense of distress, humiliation, and self-blame that accompanies a recognition that one belongs to some group. There is a bundle of traits that defines membership in the community and at a certain point, that bundle comes to be associated cognitively with failure and emotionally with shame and guilt" (p. 184).

[27] Volkan (2010) remarks: "I borrow the word 'regression' from individual psychology since I have not yet found a good term that describes a large group's 'going back' to the earlier levels of its psychic development" (p. 50).

In addition a strong desire to prevent a similar humiliation emerges. Audergon (2004) states that "the shared history has mythic proportion and binds people together in the tragedy and in the germination of a seed of redemption. 'We will not be oppressed again'" (p. 24).

In contrast to the feelings of helplessness, the sense of shame and humiliation is not restricted to those who experienced the event. As mentioned above, it can also be "felt by all those who belong to the same large-group identity" (Volkan, 2006, p. 122).

A defeated and helpless community loses agency and its identity is threatened. The victor gains in agency so that history is defined by the victor (Fierke, 2004, p. 488). Zembylas and Bekerman (2008) write: "What gets defined as the 'official' memory, therefore, reflects the power of certain groups and ideologies in society to define the past according to their interests, often by silencing alternative and competing memory discourses" (p. 129). This means that the physical disaster is just one part of the traumatic event. The loss of control and power has stark repercussions on identity, leading either to an urge for revenge or to a sense of inferiority and depression (Luhrmann, 2000).

Yet if a community cannot find adaptive solutions that help to cope with the events, the trauma becomes a part of the cultural identity and influences the group even long after the traumatic event happened and the physical danger has disappeared (Fierke, 2004, p. 488; Volkan, 2010). Volkan (1997) believes that when "members of the group are unable to initiate or resolve the mourning of their losses or reverse their feelings of humiliation, their traumatized self-images are passed down to later generations in the hope that others may be able to mourn and resolve what the prior generation could not" (p. 45), because "humans cannot accept change without mourning what has been lost" (ibid., p. 36).

A shared transgenerational trauma emerges and thus leads to the "chosen trauma" (Volkan, 2010, p. 51). Danieli (2007) observes that the trauma becomes an "unconscious organizing principle" passed on from one generation to the next, "constituting the matrix within which normal developmental conflict takes place" (p. 69).

The chosen trauma can lie dormant over long periods of time. But when reactivated in situations of threat, the group tries to repair and maintain its identity (Volkan, 2010, p. 54). The remembered humiliation and helplessness could then lead to a "time collapse". Volkan (1997) explains that "the interpretations, fantasies, and feelings about a past shared trauma commingle

with those pertaining to a current situation. Under the influence of a time collapse, people may intellectually separate the past event from the present one, but emotionally the events are merged" (p. 35).

Fierke (2004) describes how reporters in the Balkan wars frequently experienced uncertainty, while listening to stories of atrocities, about whether these events occurred yesterday, fifty, a hundred, or five hundred years ago. The current events were mixed with experiences suffered during World War II or as long ago as the time of the Ottoman invasion in the 14th and 15th century (p. 489). Similarly, Volkan recollects an Arab-Israeli meeting, where the traumatic events of the past seemed to have happened only the day before. Volkan (1997) concludes: "The feelings about them were so fresh it was clear that genuine mourning for the losses associated with these events had not taken place. Furthermore, representatives of opposing groups acted as if they themselves had witnessed such events, even though some had taken place before they were born" (pp. 34-35).

Dualistic Narratives and Dehumanisation:

According to Schirch (2008), psychological dynamics of a traumatised group "create mirror images of victimhood and good versus evil perceptions of identity. One people's freedom fighters are another people's terrorists. The image of the enemy is flat or uni-dimensional" (p. 91). Schirch examined the effects on trauma and identity of the 9/11 U.S. discourse. She found out that trauma could lead to regressive leadership resulting in the "formulation of threat narratives that construct a purely good self-image and an evil image of the other" (ibid., p. 89). This simplistic formulation of "us against them" is part of a revenge-based approach where national identity gets reinforced and dissenting voices are oppressed. Information or images that could challenge this view are hidden (ibid.). "Solidarity with others on the basis of common human suffering" is seen as disruptive (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008, p. 131).

Schirch (2008) notes that in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks researchers found a correlation between raising the level of the threat warning system and the popularity of the president, who advocated a revenge-based approach (p. 88). Schirch concludes that "the experience of trauma, fear, or threat then becomes a trigger for the ongoing formulation of dualistic identities of 'the good' versus 'the evil'. (...) Trauma remains unrecognized and

unprocessed. Identities become frozen and the ability to reflect critically on one's own behaviour and motives and those of others declines" (ibid., pp. 88-89).

Collective narratives with a strong dualism "us against them" could easily develop dehumanising tendencies. According to Volkan (2006), in a first step the enemy is seen as undesirable and in a second step he is dehumanised, e. g. compared with animals, as happened in Nazi Germany and Rwanda (p. 121). Volkan continues that "when dehumanization occurs, a 'license' is issued to murder the enemy without guilt" (ibid.).

"Redemptive" violence and focus on own needs:

A consequence of dualistic narratives and dehumanisation is that violence is seen as a redemptive act. Individual isolation and fear are given meaning in an effort to avenge past humiliation (Fierke, 2004, p. 490). Gilligan (1997) argues that "the attempt to achieve and maintain justice, or to undo or prevent injustice, is the one and only universal cause of violence"(p. 12). Levine (1997) believes that violence is a re-enactment of the traumatic event, and is intended to be freed from the consequences of trauma. Levine argues that "much of the violence that plagues humanity is a direct or indirect result of unresolved trauma that is acted out in repeated unsuccessful attempts to re-establish a sense of empowerment"(p. 175). He continues that "the urge to resolve trauma through re-enactment can be severe and compulsive. We are inextricably drawn into situations that replicate the original trauma in both obvious and unobvious ways" (ibid., p. 173). On a community scale, mass re-enactment could jeopardise any peace accord and result in protracted conflict (ibid., p. 222).

Barsalou (2008) remarks that some societies who had "suffered primarily from 'vertical' violence – that is, violence inflicted by the state against groups (...) during a period of civil war – often suffer from high rates of 'horizontal' violence" (p. 29). Societies with a large history of violence such as South Africa (ibid.) and Guatemala (Sotomayor, 2009) try in vain to find relief from trauma through re-enacted violence.

At this stage in the trauma cycle the society is primarily concerned with meeting its own needs. Compassion for the suffering of others is low. Fierke (2004) argues that "a failure of compassion, that is, the failure to recognise the suffering of others as a part of our own goals and projects, will increase the probability of future suffering, which may reverberate back on the self" (p. 491). A revenge-based approach with almost no compassion for the suffering of others

decreases rather than increases safety (Schirch, 2008). Fierke (2004) remarks that "against the background of globalisation, the spiral of trauma threatens to circle back on the very people the state claims to protect" [28] (p. 491).

Volkan (2010) argues that a trauma fuels entitlement ideologies i.e. that a group has a shared belief in their right to possess whatever they desire (p. 53). When a group's identity is threatened, some leaders know intuitively how to re-activate chosen traumas. The group will then try to do anything to stabilise, repair, maintain, and protect its identity and is even willing to "tolerate extreme sadism or masochism" if the group thinks that these actions will ultimately "help to maintain and protect our large-group identity" (ibid., p. 49).

At the end of the enemy/aggressor cycle stands tragically the eruption of violence. The victim becomes the perpetrator. While striving to regain agency and not being victim in the future, the oppressed steps into the position of an oppressor (Fierke, 2004, p. 488). Leaders instil fear by arguing that past events of humiliation and violence could repeat themselves, giving way to new violence. Fierke argues that the Balkan War and Hitler's rise in Germany can be partly explained by the past humiliations and violence endured by the Serbs from the Croatian Ustasa and earlier by the Ottomans at the famous "battle of the blackbirds", and by Germany after the treaty of Versailles (ibid.). This does not, by any means, lessen the moral responsibility for the committed atrocities (ibid., p. 490), but it underscores the possible consequences of community trauma.

When violence strikes, it aims at destroying the enemy. The enemy's social bonds and his cultural practices as well as the physical and psychological health of individuals are being targeted (Martín-Baró, 1988, p. 123; Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 11). Robben (2000) argues that the

> "mass and public rapings organized in the (...) violence in the Balkans (...) and Rwanda (...) highlight the socio-cultural uses of violence. It was aimed, inter alia, at destroying fundamental cultural norms and kinship ties. In both Bosnia and Rwanda, fathers and mothers were made to witness the repeated brutal sexual assault of their daughters –

[28] According to Fierke (2004) the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 prove this point: "If the pilots who crashed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon were inspired by the lack of US compassion to the plight of Palestinian or Iraqi children, the trauma of the latter has been constitutive of the trauma experienced by Americans on September 11. Thus, the increased repression of Palestinians will only increase the likelihood of further acts that will reproduce the trauma experienced by Americans and Israelis" (p. 491).

destroying the most basic culturally constituted parental function: protect the children" (p. 11).

Dehumanisation, re-enactment of violence, and a sense of bringing the enemy to justice transform the victim into a merciless oppressor. The new victim enters into yet another cycle of trauma. These new injustices "remain in the fabric of our collective interactions" (Audergon, 2004, p. 23), and if the cycle of trauma is not broken, generations to come bear the legacy of a chosen trauma in a never ending spiral of violence.

Transgenerational transmission:

Cyrulnik (2009b) observes that "it is impossible not to pass on something. Physical proximity is all it takes" (p. 251). Volkan (1997) adds that transmission is more than handing down stories about past humiliating calamities over generations. Behaviour and nonverbal communication play an important role. He believes that the "transmissions of traumatized self-images occur almost as if psychological DNA were planted in the personality of the younger generation through its relationship with the previous one. The transmitted psychological DNA affects both individual identity and later adult behavior" (p. 44).

In an attempt to systematise this vast area of study Weingarten (2004) names different mechanisms for transgenerational transmission of trauma: biological, psychological, familial, and societal. The biological mechanisms of transmission may be a consequence of a low level of cortisol, resulting from being subjected to emotional abuse "as those children who grew up with parents who had PTSD related to the Holocaust often did" (p. 49). The low cortisol level leads to a vulnerability to PTSD and "may contribute to subsequent biological abnormalities in responding to traumatic stress" (ibid.).

The psychological and familial mechanisms of transmission are mainly related to attachment theory. When the caretaker is a frightened or frightening caregiver, the attachment system suffers (cf. Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 1999; Weingarten, 2004, p. 50). Cyrulnik (2009b) notes that attachment plays a key role in the transgenerational transmission of trauma, and that this is influenced by gestures, some of them tiny, facial expressions (p. 178). He observed that children of traumatised parents even had nightmares of their parents' trauma, although the parents thought they had kept it secret (ibid., p. 201).

Silence is also a key factor in handing down trauma (Weingarten, 2004, p. 51). Danieli (2007) remarks that “silence, family secrets, and myths are effective mechanisms that ensure the traumata’s continued impact on subsequent generations” (p. 67; cf.: Rosenthal & Völter, 1998). Subsequently Danieli sees in the conspiracy of silence that follows trauma “the most prevalent and effective mechanism for the transmission of trauma on all dimensions” (ibid., p. 66). Danieli emphasises that “silence is profoundly destructive” (ibid.), as it prevents an individual, a family, community and nation from integrating the trauma: “They can find no words to narrate the trauma story and create a meaningful dialogue around it. This prevalence of a conspiracy of silence stands in sharp contrast to the widespread research finding that social support is the most important factor in coping with traumatic stress” (ibid.). Bettelheim (1984) concludes: “What cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest; and if it is not, the wounds continue to fester from generation to generation.” (p. 166)

This gives the family a special role in the process of transgenerational transmission. Webb (2004a) argues that a child’s reaction “is often closely related to the reactions of the child’s parents or other important adults, especially the mother” (p. 37). Danieli (2007) suggest therefore that research on coping strategies should increasingly focus on families, communities and cultures, rather than on individuals (p. 80).

Weingarten’s (2004, p. 51) fourth category, the societal mechanisms of transgenerational transmission, supports this view. Shared silence, shame, and a sense of humiliation are the background against which trauma is passed on over generations and becomes a chosen trauma (cf. Volkan, 1997, 2006, 2010).

However, as Cyrulnik (2009b) emphasises, “it is possible to pass on happiness just as easily as unhappiness” (p. 251). And Volkan (1997) notes that “what is transmitted may also change as it passes from one generation to the next” (p. 44).

The cycle of trauma describes how traumatised individuals affect a community and how communities move from victim to aggressor. The loss of fundamental values, fantasies of revenge and the need for justice, become the basis of a community’s identity shaped by its chosen trauma. Dualistic and dehumanising narratives prepare the ground for “redemptive” violence. Even if the generation that directly experienced traumatic events does not employ violence, future generations could instead try to settle the score on behalf of their ancestors.

2.3 Working definition of "community trauma"

In summary, a community trauma is more than the sum of traumatised individuals. It is possible that within a traumatised community only few or even no people exist who actually experienced the traumatic event personally, yet the effects are perceived over many generations.

Thus, the definition of community trauma used in this research regards community trauma as the traumatisation of a group with a shared identity (Volkan, 2010). The traumatisation could be experienced by a large number of group members (mass trauma) (Webb, 2004b), or it could be influenced by other group members' trauma, sparking community trauma, or through transgenerational transmission mechanisms (biological, psychological, familial, and societal) (Danieli, 1998, 2007; Volkan, 1997, 2006, 2010; Weingarten, 2004). Community trauma is characterised by distorted community values, functioning in a survival mode, and by feelings of guilt and humiliation leading to an increased group identity that sees the group as victim (Audergon, 2004, 2005; Fierke, 2004; Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Uni-dimensional and good versus evil narratives prevail, which dehumanise the enemy and may ultimately lead to new violence as an attempt to achieve justice (Gilligan, 1997; Schirch, 2008).

This definition assumes that community trauma is not only limited to the personal or familial realm but affects a wide range of societal issues. Hence, this definition highlights the scope of different reactions after community trauma, reactions which consist of such diverse topics as political and economic decision making, social dynamics, interpretation of history, and future expectations of threats and wellbeing. Community trauma can be far reaching and ongoing over large periods of time. Consequently, even when the traumatic events have ended, when the war is over and peace has been agreed, the consequences of trauma still need to be dealt with.

In comparison with individual trauma, community trauma uses methods of psychological treatment to a lesser extent. However, the more individuals are affected, the more individual treatment is required. In cases of mass trauma it is especially important to combine communal and individual approaches to coping with trauma.

Thus, dealing with community trauma requires a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach. In the design of community development methods it helps to be aware of the fact that traumatised individuals may have difficulties in shaping healthy community structures because of their shattered belief systems and their ongoing process of reorientation. Yet it is also important to

emphasise the fact that the treatment of PTSD is only a fraction of what is needed for a community or society to recover after trauma.

2.4 Results so far

Chapters 1 and 2 provided a definition of trauma and discussed the specific factors that influenced trauma. It has become clear that individual trauma and community trauma are interconnected yet distinct. Research over the past decades has uncovered much of the mechanisms of trauma. Especially after the Holocaust, and later the Vietnam War, research on trauma allowed increased insight into how trauma develops. Crying out, stunned reactions, dissociation and denial, intrusive phenomena like flashbacks and nightmares are now understood as normal reactions after traumatic events.

Analysis of the physiological and psychological consequences of trauma led to the development of the concept of PTSD which was then incorporated into the DSM and ICD. This helped to alleviate considerably the sufferings of the many affected persons. However, it was found out that not every traumatic event leads necessarily to chronic diseases like PTSD. The temporary over-emphasis on PTSD gave way to a broader perspective on trauma, including socio-political considerations. Awareness that it was not enough to treat the individual and leave the sources of trauma unattended increased.

The individuals' reactions to trauma are shaped by many factors like the nature of the traumatic event, the individual preconditions and the reaction of the support system. It is therefore not generally possible to predict the consequences of traumatic events for an individual. Although it is evident that ongoing or multiple traumatisation usually increases the likelihood of severe traumatisation, factors like resilience, individual coping strategies, spirituality, and support by the family and community vary widely. It is therefore imperative to have a focus on individuals and assist them in coping with trauma. In this respect much has been accomplished and many professionals are able to help with their expertise in conflict and post conflict areas.

It has become evident that the focus on individuals is just one part of the process of dealing with trauma. Even an individual's trauma has repercussions on the surrounding community, let alone the effects of mass traumatisation. In any case, the community has to deal with the consequences. Chapter 2 gave an overview of some of the possible consequences of community trauma.

In traumatised communities fundamental social values are threatened and the social fabric is in danger. With this threat, a crucial factor in the individual's support system deteriorates. A new identity is formed within the community that is defined by the relationship to the enemy. The sense of humiliation, loss of agency, and inferiority develop along with fantasies of delivering justice through revenge. New identity is characterised by uni-dimensional narratives and an oversimplified description of the enemy. This new identity can linger on for centuries and become a chosen trauma, transmitted over generations. Yet if the traumatisation remains unattended, it could ultimately erupt into new violence. The former victim becomes a perpetrator and the trauma cycle starts again.

As could be seen, trauma has a strong impact on individuals as well as on communities. Perceptions are distorted and coping strategies limited. Robben (2000) notes that trauma is inherently incomprehensible, because "partial forgetting is a defining characteristic of trauma" (p. 7). Subsequently all efforts towards reconciliation in protracted conflicts need to be aware of possible traumatisation. A peace process that fails to deal with the narratives of a chosen trauma is extremely fragile, and a sudden outbreak of uncontrollable violence is possible.

The next chapter presents coping strategies with a special focus on community trauma. This will provide the basis for the discussion about reconciliation.

Chapter 3 Coping after community trauma

3.1 Coping

As discussed in the previous chapters, trauma, be it individual or communal, is the consequence of an event or series of events that exhausted the victims' capacities to process these in a constructive and healthy way. As a consequence, the reconstruction of basic patterns of life is required. In order to cope with trauma, strategies are needed that help the individual and the community to live again.

The main focus of this chapter will be on coping after community trauma and on how the community can increase its own resilience. The problem of how to relate to the oppressor and how it is possible to continue to live together in the same country will be discussed within the topic of reconciliation.

Coping with stress is "an effort to maintain psychological balance and functioning despite excessive demands" (Shalev & Ursano, 2003, p. 6; cf.: Webb, 2004a, p. 30). Coping draws on the victims' existing or developing resilience. As described before, resilience enables a person to "bounce back", i.e. to cope with certain stressful events. Thus, when coping with traumatic stress a community or individual will need to increase their level of resilience.

Trauma is shaped by the process of a constantly changing interplay between the social environment and the psychological state of an individual (Becker, 2006, pp. 195-196) and has long lasting consequences since the effects of trauma reach far beyond the single event (ibid., p. 196). Therefore, when dealing with traumatised individuals or communities, key aspects of coping with trauma are both social and political (ibid., p. 200). Mollica (2006) adds that "healing must occur not only within individuals but also within societies" (p. 223). That means that coping with community trauma is a societal task and encompasses a wide range of issues. Barsalou (2008) emphasises this by rejecting "single shot approaches" or "one time fixes" (p. 33). She believes that these usually raise unrealistic expectations and fall short of expected goals. This wider view of trauma has continued to gain recognition and stands in contrast to a narrow focus on the psychological and biological causes of trauma (cf. Becker, 2006, p. 200; Mollica, 2006, p. 222).

The cycle of victimhood and violence after traumatic events is the consequence of an actual or perceived overload resulting in psychological "disintegration" (Hicks, 2008, p. 136). Anger, fear and anxiety arise out of the experiences of shame, guilt and humiliation. The ability to learn from and to interact with others has been shut down. Identity is threatened by large group regressions (Volkan, 2010, p. 50), as described in chapter 2, and destructive identity patterns may develop. Beliefs about the self and the other have become "frozen" (Hicks, 2008, p. 142). Coping with trauma, therefore, involves the individual's efforts to deal with the excessive demands of the stressor as well as a community's ability to break the cycle of (chosen) trauma and revenge based choices. Yoder (2005) remarks that "reconciliation is not an event", it is rather the "result of the labor" of a long journey transforming "trauma into hope for the future by breaking the cycle of victimhood and violence" (p. 68). The response of a community needs to shift from being antagonistic and uni-dimensional to being inclusive, multidimensional and thus being restorative for the self and the community.

Within this chapter's main focus on coping with trauma a special emphasis is put on discussing how an identity becomes restorative and thus becomes the basis for reconciliation. As will be shown, this is a process of unfreezing identities to allow renewed interaction with the other and a restored community.

3.2 Restorative identity

Sen (2006) notes that identity can be a source of joy, strength and confidence but also a source of violence. He remarks that "a strong – and exclusive – sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups" (pp. 1-2), which could ultimately lead to violence against these groups. Taylor (1989) is convinced that it is usually instinctive for people to act morally. They have an inborn inhibition against inflicting "death or injury on another [and] an inclination to come to the help of the injured or endangered" (p. 5). However, the framework or horizon within which a person makes sense of their own actions has a strong influence on their "moral thinking" (ibid., p. 15). Taylor believes that an individual's decision about whether something is good or bad is shaped by the person's framework. Taylor explains that

> "to know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can

try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose" (ibid., p. 27).

Thus, identity involves having a "stand on moral and spiritual matters" and is influenced by a "defining community" (ibid., p. 36). If however, this frame is shattered and the commitment or identification to this frame has been lost for individuals, "they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them" (ibid., p. 27). This can be described as "an 'identity crisis', an acute form of disorientation, which people often express in terms of not knowing who they are, but which can also be seen as a radical uncertainty of where they stand" (ibid.).

In order to restore identity, in the sense of rebuilding identity, a new framework has to be set up entailing new commitments and identifications and a new sense of orientation. A restored identity will be different from what it was before. A new stand on moral and spiritual matters has to be gained. Many parts of the old identity have been shattered. Former ways of seeing the self are no longer convincing and have lost their power. In contrast, people with restored identities have regained their orientation, know again who they are, and became certain about where they stand.

To promote an identity that restores the self and the community and that gives strength and confidence – not at the expense of an enemy – three main aspects have to be considered: dealing with difficult life conditions, healing past wounds, and complexifying identities[29].

As depicted in the diagram below[30] these strategies can break the cycle of community trauma – the cycle of violence, transgenerational transmission and "indefinitely frozen" (Hicks, 2008, p. 142) identities. These three aspects are by no means a linear process or in a fixed sequence. They support each other at different stages and encompass short term and immediate actions as well as long-term developments. The ultimate goal is to facilitate reconciliation. Below I am going to discuss these three aspects in respect of their role in the process of restoring identities, this being a key aspect in coping with community trauma.

[29] Lisa Schirch (2008) uses the term "complexifying identities" to describe a development that "breaks free from trauma-habituated thought processes that have conditioned a good versus evil understanding of identity" and that leads towards a more complex view of "their own and other's identities" (p. 93).
[30] This diagram is based on the "enemy/aggressor cycle" presented in chapter 2 (C. Yoder, 2005, p. 38; Zehr, 2008, p. 11) and Yoder's model "Trauma Healing Journey – Breaking the Cycles" (C. Yoder, 2005, p. 47).

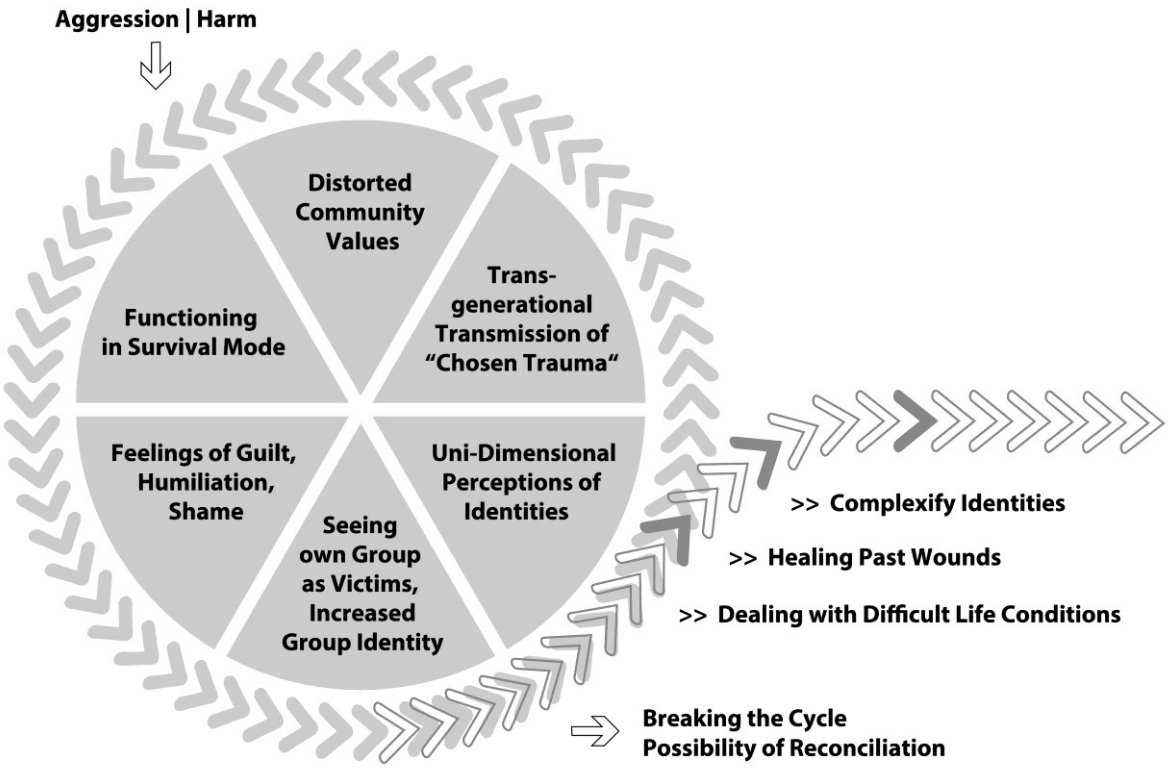

Figure 3-1 Breaking the cycle of violence

3.2.1 Dealing with difficult life conditions

It is the overload of feelings and experiences that threaten one's identity. All that holds an individual or a community together seems to dissolve. Traumatic experiences are a threat to one's integrity. Under normal life conditions, integrity stabilises, gives inner coherence and enables functioning (Hicks, 2008, p. 142). Difficult life conditions exacerbate instability and insecurity. Staub (2007) argues that "economic problems, political confusion and disorganization, great societal changes, and the social chaos they create" contribute to the outbreak of violence (p. 339). Traumatic events threaten basic rights because of their impact on daily life (Errante, 1997, p. 369). Instead of stabilising routines, discontinuity prevails and community mobilisation deteriorates which further deepens trauma.

Bearing in mind that trauma can have long-term effects, it is important to provide early support after traumatic events to help reduce long-term psychological damage (Breslau, 2000, p. 185; Knapp, 2010, p. 94). Dealing with difficult life conditions starts with stabilising and calming the

traumatised community (Sachsse, 2009b, p. 198)[31]. This can be achieved by ensuring safety (Sachsse, 2009b, p. 198; C. Yoder, 2005, p. 47)[32], increasing a sense of belonging (Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 164)[33], providing structure in everyday life (Horowitz, 2002, p. 37)[34], and encouraging the community[35].

In practical terms, this means strengthening networks and community forums in order to encourage mutual support (Norris & Thompson, 1995, p. 59) and social cohesion (Errante, 1997, p. 377; Fairbank, Friedman, Jong, Green, & Solomon, 2003, p. 63). Group meetings are a valuable tool for brainstorming about strategies to rebuild the community, heighten awareness of ongoing problems, and sensitise officials about the needs of the community (Fairbank, et al., 2003, p. 63). Also local schools can contribute to community stabilisation. Teachers can help pupils not only by restoring a daily routine and providing continuity but also by addressing the emotional needs of children (Errante, 1997, p. 372; Fairbank, et al., 2003, p. 64).

After these first response and short-term measures, support for a community's long-term development is necessary. It is central for recovery after traumatic events to increase a community's overall functioning (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 64). A valuable contribution is provided by the Disaster Risk Reduction concept[36]. It aims at "building long-term community resilience" by reducing vulnerability, raising awareness and sharing knowledge (Bodenhamer, 2006, p. 6). Also advocacy and "building strong systems of communication" help to reduce risks and build community resilience (ibid.).

[31] Sachsse (2009b) notes that the process of stabilising has to accompany the entire coping process and sometimes it remains a lifelong task (p. 198).
[32] Carolyn Yoder raises the question of whether a feeling of safety can be reached through an "inner strength that pushes us beyond fear" by knowing one's own ideals and "being grounded psychologically, socially (in a community), emotionally, and spiritually" and thus create an inner space "that allows healing to begin even without complete physical safety". Numerous examples show that even in situations of protracted conflict, some people have the ability to break the cycle of trauma in the midst of ongoing violence (2005, p. 51).
[33] Becker notes that victims need to be integrated rather than marginalised (2006, p. 133). Shalev and Errera explain that traumatic events increase the feeling of abandonment and loneliness, therefore "reducing survivors' loneliness is not a bad idea" (2008, p. 164).
[34] Horowitz lists a set of measures that could support trauma victims during or shortly after traumatic events: providing opportunities for discussion with others; offering activities during leisure time to experience positive social connection; integrating the person into helping others in order to restore self-esteem and a sense of worth; providing help in the case of sleep disruption by increasing the sense of safety at night (2002, p. 37).
[35] Shalev and Errera list ways of discouraging the victims and weakening their ability to recover after trauma: 1. dramatise: relying on dramatic reporting and emotionality instead of drawing information from factual reporting; 2. pathologise: emphasising the possibility of health problems and assess early reactions after traumatic events as a symptom of mental disorder; 3. catastrophise using extreme expressions when talking about the traumatic event; 4. create negative expectations: emphasising possible negative outcomes as a consequence of traumatic reaction without mentioning the possibility of eventual good reaction, 5. lie, mislead, misinform or otherwise manipulate information which could result in mistrust, confusion and anxiety; 6. emphasise the role of experts; and, 7. ignore, show distance or indifference, lack of sharing (2008, p. 166).
[36] Bodenhamer defines disaster risk reduction as the conceptual framework considering elements "that minimize vulnerabilities, hazards and risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or limit (mitigation & preparedness) adverse impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development" (2006, p. 5).

The Disaster Risk Reduction concept identifies poverty and underdevelopment as closely linked to disaster and to decreased community resilience (ibid., p. 7). Schmidt and Bloemertz (2005) argue that the "lack of financial and material resources gives poor people less flexibility in protecting their livelihoods and homes against disaster" and that they lack the political power to enforce their rights. (pp. 29-30). It is therefore essential to not only implement mobilising measures such as housing, healthcare, and nutrition (Errante, 1997, p. 372) but also to build up political, economical, judicial or infrastructural systems (Hart, 2008a, p. 119) that serve the needs of all people (ibid., p. 116). Aidt (2009, p. 288) argues that sound political systems are central for overall development and poverty reduction, namely those systems that provide basic security and successful anti-corruption policies (p. 288; cf. Detotto & Otranto, 2010, p. 340). Communities, families, schools, labour markets, the police and criminal justice are inevitably interconnected. Achievements made at one level could be undone by failures at another (Sherman et al., 1998; cf. Whitzman, 2008). Aidt concludes that if the political systems and policies are built on the principles of freedom, such as democracy and a free press, an increase in sustainable development is very likely (2009, p. 285). Societal actions that are perceived as fair and transparent increase the willingness to engage in new learning processes, to amend the beliefs about others, and thus to develop one's own identity. Dealing with difficult life conditions therefore seeks, at different levels, to improve structural factors in order to increase a community's functioning and with this to reduce or prevent psychological trauma (Norris & Thompson, 1995, p. 63).

In summary, coping with trauma by dealing with difficult life conditions involves developmental issues on various levels – individual, communal and societal. Summerfield (1995) therefore rightly suggests that the discussion about coping with trauma should be "conducted within a human rights framework and not as if it is just a new specialism" (p. 28). Nussbaum (2007b) supports this view by linking human development and human rights closely. Her Human Development and Capability approach has been widely recognised. She defines it as a "species of a human rights approach" (p. 21). The aim of this approach is to increase people's functioning in areas of central importance, coined as "Human Capabilities"[37], and to provide a "benchmark for a minimally decent human life" (ibid., p. 22). Nussbaum (2007a) argues that

[37] Nussbaum (2006) lists ten "Central Human Capabilities" that include "life, bodily health, bodily integrity, the development and expression of senses, imagination and thought, emotional health, practical reason, affiliation (both personal and political), relationships with other species and the world of nature, play, and control over one's environment (both material and social)" (pp. 58-59).

these capabilities should be regarded as “fundamental entitlements” and basic rights that are not subject to political decision making and public opinion (p. 56)[38]. Members of a community should be fully and effectively empowered and any obstacle to empowerment should be removed (2006, p. 55). To support development, increase human capability in order to cope with difficult life conditions the focus needs to be on what “people are actually able to do and to be” (ibid.). This focus is necessary in order to find opportunities for better functioning (ibid.). An individual is “a dignified free being who shapes his or her own life, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in the manner of a flock or herd animal” (2002, p. 130). If each individual is treated as a “bearer of value” (ibid.) whole communities are capacitated and able to deal more effectively with difficult life conditions. Basic human rights that focus on furthering individuals’ capabilities and their development help them to bounce back to life. In other words, the overall level of resilience increases by drawing on a person’s or community’s existing resources and not from “rare and special qualities” (Masten, 2001, p. 235). Individuals and communities who are able to develop in a secure environment, who experience respect for their life and life conditions, are better equipped to reach out to others. Establishing a sense of coherence and diminishing the load of new experiences gives time for new identity formation towards an identity that restores. The threat to one’s integrity is reduced and along with it anger and anxiety are also diminished. The ground is prepared for unfreezing beliefs about others. Breaking the cycle and starting the journey towards reconciliation becomes a real opportunity.

3.2.2 Healing past wounds

Healing past wounds is the second major factor in breaking the cycle of trauma. It runs parallel to dealing with difficult life conditions. The challenge is also to unfreeze beliefs about others, to support identity formation that restores, and to open the path towards reconciliation.

Coping with the traumas of the past is a difficult task. A person’s psyche “can die as a result of psychotrauma” (Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 12). Images of horror can invade the conscious mind day and night (ibid., p. 108). The feelings can be described as a kind of oxymoron. A child, for example, can be ashamed because of being proud for having survived when loved ones did not make it and at the same time “his heroism proves to him that he was a coward because, if he had really been brave, he would have died along with his family” (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 74). Especially when psycho-trauma is repeated over a long time a disorder is imprinted on the

[38] Nussbaum (2007a) remarks that “if rights of the most fundamental type can be removed as the result of a hasty popular judgment, minorities will enjoy less security and a nation’s citizens will, hence, enjoy less equality” (p. 56).

individual that is not always immediately visible but longer lasting, and it affects the personality throughout development (ibid., p. 84). Ongoing tension and fear have a positive relation with a "long-term impact on the mental health of children, families and communities"(Errante, 1997, p. 377). Shalev and Errera (2008) note that after traumatic events the "conditional probability of developing PTSD (...) is about 9%, across studies and continents" (p. 152).

The wounds they have suffered need time to heal and it is not possible to go back to life immediately (Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 258). Cyrulnik believes that "if we walk too soon after we have broken a leg, we make the fracture worse, and if we speak too soon, the wound stays open. But sooner or later, we have to stop living with death and, if we are to find a little happiness, we really do have to break free from our wounded past" (ibid., p. 259).

In the search for new life after a traumatic event, some people benefit from a process of discovery and are able to deal successfully with the challenges posed by traumatic events (Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 167). Dass-Brailsford (2010b) notes that "although crises may be perceived as negative events, crisis interventions provide opportunities for clients to learn new coping skills" (p. 58). Others, however, may not benefit from such challenges as they are unable to learn new skills so easily (Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 168). Each individual case therefore poses the question: "How do we become human despite the blows" that we had to endure? (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 5). How is it possible to succeed, "to live and to develop in a positive and socially acceptable way, despite the stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of negative outcome?" (ibid.). How do we break the cycle of victimhood, violence and trauma?

Individuals and communities who are at peace with their own past are better able to actively shape their future. Becker (2006) argues that the acknowledgment of the individual's or community's past and the resulting disempowerment is crucial. All too often trauma coping strategies focus solely on empowerment and mobilising inner resources. Becker emphasises that trauma is the absolute experience of disempowerment that includes elements of fear and grief resulting in threat and loss. Hence, effective empowerment requires acknowledgement of the disempowerment and an understanding of its consequences (ibid., p. 184). An important way to acknowledge the experiences of the past is to engage in grieving and mourning processes. Figely (2006b) remarked as early as the 1990s, that the treatment of trauma and

grief have to be interconnected and should not be seen as separate fields of research (p. 54). Volkan (1997) agrees when pointing out that “humans cannot accept change without mourning what has been lost” (p. 36). He states that mourning is an involuntary process that allows us ultimately “to let go of our previous attachments, to adjust internally to the absence of lost people or things and to get on with our lives” (ibid.). A healthy mourning process can help break the cycle of violence through new identity formation with changed beliefs about self and others.

When traumatic events hit, beliefs about ourselves and our world are shaken and sometimes severely damaged. The sense of insecurity about one’s own identity could draw the victims into a trauma cycle. This applies to individuals as well as to groups. Volkan (1997) found out that “members of a group who share the same loss collectively go through a similar psychological mourning process” (p. 38). Both individuals and larger groups need to find a way to live with losses after trauma. When communities are traumatised “members are exposed together and must recover together” (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008, p. 145). The loss of resources is shared by the members of traumatised communities (ibid., p. 135).

Engaging into a grieving process acknowledges and honours the loss (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 80). If time and space is given for grieving, the loss can be integrated into one’s identity and become a part of the newly built belief system. The grieving process gives the opportunity “to rebuild a new belief system from the foundation up” which offers safety and hope for the future (ibid.). Healing begins by building oneself around the loss (ibid., p. 230)[39]. When a community gathers it has the ability to share communal grief and confront “the fear, shame, isolation and horror of what has occurred” (Deusen Hunsinger, 2011, p. 24). The personal loss can be integrated into the losses of the larger community (ibid., p. 23). It is important to make room for lamentation, complaint and grief because “by permitting an unrelieved descent into the raw emotions of grief within the secure boundaries of ritual space, hope and trust may be paradoxically restored” (ibid., p. 24).

This restoration includes the need to give meaning to the traumatic events out of which new narratives about self, the community and others can be created. Rebuilding the belief system towards a restorative identity prevents destructive narratives from perpetuating the trauma cycle.

[39] Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005) remark: “You will not ‘get over’ the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will build yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to” (p. 230).

Viktor Frankl is one of the most prominent researchers on the influence of finding meaning during and after traumatic events. His experiences in different Nazi concentration camps shaped his conviction that the search for meaning is at the core of human existence. He defines the loss of meaning as an "existential vacuum" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 49) which is "the experience of a total lack, or loss, of an ultimate meaning to one's existence that would make life worthwhile" (ibid.). For Frankl (2002) the need for meaning is the "most human of all human needs"[40] (p. 267). Humans are "characterized by [their] reaching out for meaning and purpose in life" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 177). On numerous occasions during his imprisonment in the concentration camps he saw the difference between those who had a meaning in life, e. g. if someone or something was waiting for them[41], and those who had lost all hope. Meaning was the source of previously unknown strength for the prisoners. Hopelessness on the other hand drained them of their strength leaving them with no will to live (Frankl, 2006). Finding meaning changes the self-perception of being a victim into regaining control and responsibility and thus being able to take a stand about the traumatic events and determine the victim's own responses – even in the midst of suffering. Frankl (2006) states: "The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances – to add a deeper meaning to his life" (p. 67). Finding meaning or at least believing that "the quest for ultimate meaning of our sufferings could be answered" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 192) is the most effective way to survive even the direst circumstances (2006, pp. 103-104).

Numerous researchers support the crucial importance of the meaning giving process (Cyrulnik, 2009b; McCombs, 2010; Webb, 2004b). Cyrulnik (2009b) remarks that if trauma has no meaning, we are shattered. Giving meaning is like clearing the fog (p. 37). And those who want to give a helping hand to traumatised victims whose psyche is dying, have to work at giving meaning in order to help them to find their place once more (ibid., p. 17).

Yet unlike other psychological approaches, Frankl's concept of meaning is inextricably linked with belief in God. He doubts that the world which can be perceived by humans is all there is. He invites people to consider the possibility of a world that is beyond our world and which is not currently accessible for us (2002, p. 272). The relevance of this concept becomes clear when

[40] "menschlichste aller menschlichen Bedürfnisse"
[41] Frankl describes three different ways in which meaning can be found: "first, by what he gives to the world in terms of his creation; second, by what he takes from the world in terms of encounters and experiences; and third, by the stand he takes when faced with a fate which he cannot change" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 179).

understanding has come to its limits. There is no proof either of the meaninglessness of life or of the existence of a hidden meaning (ibid., p. 274). Yet an "existential decision"[42] is possible when knowledge gives way to believing (ibid.). Frankl emphasises that a "therapist who ignores the spiritual, and is thus forced to ignore the will-to-meaning is giving one of his most valuable assets away, for it is this very will-to-meaning that we should evoke, it is to this will that a psychotherapist should appeal" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 210). Believers perceive their quest for meaning as a mission given by God (ibid., p. 214). He is the taskmaster for the believers' mission and in experiencing the taskmaster the meaning-giving process goes on (ibid.). Therefore, a person "should not ask what he can expect from life, but should rather understand that life expects something from him" (ibid.) . The central question is not about the meaning of one's life but about being aware of the obligation to discover what life expects of one that is important. The solution to this challenge is to face problems and take responsibility for oneself (ibid.).

Subsequently, Frankl suggests a cooperation between psychotherapy and spiritual care. Spirituality has an eminently psycho-hygienic side-effect providing a "spiritual anchor" and feelings of security which cannot be found anywhere else (ibid.). This has also been emphasised by Christian theologians. The victims' need for an anchor and for reliable relationships is considerable. Van Deusen Hunsinger (2011) notes that "scripture attests again and again that by the power of the Spirit, God comes to those who cry out for help"(pp. 21-22). Theologian Oswald Bayer (2008) places some caveats when talking about finding meaning. He notes that "the inescapable suffering from events that oppose creation is painful and cannot be domesticated by, e.g. transforming the 'why'-question into a 'what for'-question"[43] (p. 244). Assigning meaning to an event can be an important part within an individual's or communities' development. When everything that was sure and stable is destroyed by traumatic events, life demands a new interpretative framework (Klessmann, 2008, p. 248). However, God's presence can only be experienced within the individual contingent experiences. It is not possible to give meaning to meaninglessness in a general manner and as a universally valid answer (Bayer, 2008, p. 245). Bayer emphasises: "God doesn't want suffering – he suffers"[44] (ibid.). Ultimately, those who reflect about their suffering need to find hope in the eschatological prospect that

[42] "existentielle Entscheidung"
[43] "Das unausweichliche Erleiden des Schöpfungswidrigen ist schmerzhaft und lässt sich nicht – etwa durch die Umwandlung der 'Warum'-Frage in die 'Wozu'-Frage (...) domestizieren."
[44] "Gott will das Leid nicht – er leidet."

suffering will be overcome (ibid., p. 244). This hope depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' teaching about the final judgement makes clear that "the power of facts will not triumph; God does not forget suffering and oppression"[45] (ibid.). Those captivated by suffering, sin and death can experience God's radical solidarity through Jesus Christ (Rom 6:23; 724). "By identifying himself with the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross God takes onto himself all man's suffering, sin and death in order to overcome them"[46] (ibid.). This tension between finding meaning and meaninglessness must be endured until the day when the difference between believing and seeing is dissolved and it becomes apparent that God's very being is entirely just (ibid., pp. 243-244). Bayer concludes that "*coram deo* resistance and surrender belong together: The protest against an unjust life, which is expressed in lamentation (Lk 18:1-8) and the uncomplaining worship - as being in tension with it - remain a fundamental category of Christian discourse"[47] (ibid., p. 244).

Eberhard Jüngel (1998) stresses that finding meaning is linked to the question of truth. Meaning is inextricably connected to one's understanding of being and meaning has to evolve out of this being. It is not a person's actions, as Jüngel notes, that constitute meaning: "The question about human existence doesn't correspond to the question of meaning, but corresponds to the question of the truth of human life (ibid., p. 222)[48]. In Gal 2:14 Paul calls this truth "the truth of the gospel" (NIV, 2011) and for John it is Christ who is the truth (Jn 14:6). John, in addition, emphasises that the truth sets the believer free (Jn 8:32), free from lies that have the ability to present themselves as meaningful even though they have no meaning (ibid., p. 223). It is the justification through Jesus Christ that liberates people from the sham forms of existence (ibid.) and enables the justified believer to hear the voice of Christ (Jn 18:37). The life of truth and faith in God and Jesus Christ constitutes the larger framework out of which the events in one's life may attain meaning. The belief that God is in control of all events allows the sufferer to reframe the trauma and to open the door to finding ways to resolve it (Crawford, et al., 2006, p. 363; McCombs, 2010, p. 140).

[45] "Die Macht des faktischen siegt nicht; Leid und Unterdrückung sind bei Gott nicht vergessen."
[46] "Indem Gott sich mit dem Leid Christi am Kreuz identifiziert, nimmt er Leid, Sünde und Tod der Menschen in sich auf um sie zu überwinden."
[47] "Widerstand und Ergebung gehören auch *coram Deo* zusammen: Der Protest gegen ungerechtes Leben, der in der Klage laut wird (Lk 18,1-8), bleibt – in der Spannung zur klaglosen Anbetung – eine grundlegende Kategorie christlicher Rede."
[48] "Der Frage nach dem Sein des Menschen korrespondiert aber nicht die Frage nach dem Sinn, sondern die Frage nach der *Wahrheit* des menschlichen Lebens."

Finding meaning is a source of strength when dealing with the wounds of the past. Meaning enables individuals and communities who are trapped in the trauma cycle to base their life on a renewed belief system. This new system does not have to explain the traumatic event but it gives a perspective that reaches beyond understanding. Those who believe in God have the possibility of entrusting their whole existence to God and to hand over all meaninglessness to him. This is a way of developing identities that are restorative for the self and for the relationships with others and God[49].

The process of finding meaning will then have to flow into a new narrative about the self and one's community. Isak Dinesen wrote: "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them" (as cited in: Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 156). Narratives are an instrument to defy destiny (Kaufmann, 2004, p. 153) and are a part of the process of working on meaning (Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 37). Cyrulnik (2009b) speaks of turning one's own history into a vision that can modify reality and construct resilience proving that trauma is not an irreversible destiny (ibid., p. 44). He notes that it is possible for anyone either to choose to "submit to history or break free from it by using it" (ibid., p. 172)[50]. This choice of life over death is active and means "reaching out with the fragile hope that the trauma can be healed or transformed, that the pain will abate, or that some kind of normalcy will return" (Deusen Hunsinger, 2011, p. 18).

Yet the process of developing narratives which provide meaning is complicated as trauma reduces the ability to produce a structured narrative. Neuro-imaging research found out that traumatic memories are of a non-verbal nature. The capacity to talk or to articulate feelings decreases sharply as does the capacity to "know" (Bessel A. van der Kolk, 2006, p. 220). Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, and Koenig (2007) therefore suggests that "building new narratives based on healthy perceptions may facilitate the integration of traumatic mnemonic traces and sensorial fragments in a new cognitive synthesis" (p. 345). Building new narratives is a time consuming and fragile endeavour that has to find meaning in the face of shattered memories. A vision of a new life and belief system has to be built while the past remains partly

[49] Many studies have investigated the influence of religious involvement and spirituality on trauma recovery and found out that in most cases a stronger religious involvement was associated with higher mental well being and that victims benefit from their religious belief which gives them guidance, comfort and support (Boyd, et al., 2010, p. 157; Crawford, et al., 2006, p. 358; Harris et al., 2008; McCombs, 2010, p. 134; Pargament, et al., 2004; Peres, et al., 2007, p. 347).

[50] Cyrulnik, who himself had a deeply traumatic childhood, poses some challenging questions to the victims since he believes that change is only possible if deliberate action is taken. He asks: "What are you going to do with your wounds? Are you going to give in and become a professional victim, so as to give those who want to help you a clear conscience? Are you going to get your revenge by going public (...) so as to make your aggressors or the people who refused to help you feel guilty? Are you going to use your tragedy to promote an ideology that will make it an issue in a power struggle? Are you going to suffer in silence and wear your smile as a mask? Or are you going to strengthen the healthy part of yourself so as to heal your wound and become human after all?" (2009a, pp. 214-215)

incomprehensible. Strength and personal will[51] are required after extremely strenuous events that tend to weaken the person's will and drain away their energy.

From a Christian perspective the teachings of the Bible provide a unique narrative of God himself choosing to suffer. Those who are willing to interpret their own life in the light of this narrative experience "the loving gaze of one who cherishes us, miraculous outpourings of grace, a steady anchor in times of distress, mercy on our weakness, forgiveness of our sins, and most basic of all, the lifeline of basic trust" (Deusen Hunsinger, 2011, p. 19). The power of sin and death – which is the root of all trauma – vanishes (ibid.). The Apostle Paul emphasises that those who are in Christ become new (2 Cor. 5:17), are reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:18), and are therefore able to live a new life even in the midst of sufferings (Rom 5:3).

The process of developing new narratives is not only concerned with finding meaning but also with the way victims express themselves. The disclosure of their experience is of special importance. Cyrulnik (2009a) believes that "as soon as we can talk about a trauma, draw it, put it on a stage or think it through, we can control the emotions that either overwhelmed us or made us freeze when it occurred. Representing the tragedy allows us to rework the feelings it triggers" (p. 89). To keep the events secret damages a person and their relationships. Poetry for example "allows us to survive when the real world is unbearable" (ibid., p. 48) and art has the capacity to bring us back to life after trauma (ibid., p. 265). Cyrulnik concludes that "the pen and pencil do more to defend us than activism, vengeance, isolation or regression. Writing condenses a great number of defence mechanisms – intellectualization, daydreaming, rationalization and sublimation – into a single activity" (ibid., p. 269).

However, revealing a secret is not always welcomed by the surrounding community. To bear the truth can be hard and is sometimes unacceptable even for those who are closest to the victim (ibid.). It is difficult for communities to listen and respond to traumatic events (Audergon, 2004, p. 20). Parts of the community wish to move on and leave the gruesome stories behind. Some even want the stories blotted out of history (ibid., p. 21). Audergon explains that

> "[t]he numbing associated with trauma happens at a community level and a global level, and includes difficulty in witnessing and responding to the atrocity, fear of triggering

[51] Bass and Davis (1988) quote an interview of a traumatised person: "For me the decision not to identify with the past was a decision, not just a change I went through in the healing process. I had to make a quantum leap that I was no longer going to have the abuse be the cause and my life be the effect. . . . Right now you have to choose what standpoint you are going to live life from. And it's a constant choice" (p. 457).

traumatic experience in others, hopelessness, fear of guilt or having to reckon with accountability, punishment or reparations, disinterest and disdain, and the wish to remain sealed in privilege and a happier view of the world" (ibid., p. 20).

As a consequence the victims can be torn between "the internal constraints that force them to speak and the external force that obliges them to keep quiet" (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 263). Yet, if there is no room to express themselves, the trauma will remain in the fabric of the individuals, families and communities that have suffered from atrocities (Audergon, 2004, p. 20). If there is no room for expressing emotions and if we act as if nothing had happened then the wounds are deepened (ibid., p. 88). In order to find meaning and to rework the trauma the stories have to be uncovered and told. In this difficult situation, victims often find that the best means of expression is creativity (Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 263). Bringing trauma "on stage" – although it means to be exposed and vulnerable – is like "harbouring life" (ibid., p. 205) and it is much more effective than chemically induced relief. Cyrulnik believes that "once we have confided our secret and tried to understand our suffering, we are no longer the same. We have undergone metamorphosis" (ibid., p. 261). And this means that significant steps have been taken towards coping with past events and constructing identity.

Breaking the cycle of trauma by unfreezing identities and developing restorative identities has been described as a process of dealing with difficult life conditions and with the wounds of the past. It is a process of recovering and learning that draws on the community's resilience, on its "capacity (...) to cope successfully with and recover from stresses and shocks (...), maintain or enhance capacities or assets over time" (Bodenhamer, 2006, p. 5).

The third main aspect on the pathway towards coping with trauma is to complexify identities.

3.2.3 Complexifying identities

There is no doubt that by finding meaning, beliefs about the self and others may become more complex and less rigid. Yet, it is also possible that after a process of dealing with difficult life conditions and past wounds identities remain determined by uni-dimensional narratives. These narratives could lead to destructive community behaviour and serve as a basis for chosen traumas thus, perpetuating hostility over centuries (Volkan, 1997). Trauma can shatter a belief system and make those who suffered from trauma vulnerable to religious or ideological misguidance, fuelling prejudice and the persecution of those holding different beliefs (Crawford,

et al., 2006, p. 364). This could lead to the development of an identity that, on the one hand, warmly welcomes some people and on the other hand excludes others (Sen, 2006, p. 2). Breaking the cycle of trauma entails the need to amend and broaden the perception of oneself and others, in other words, to complexify the perception of identities in order to break the "us versus them" pattern (Schirch, 2008, p. 93).

Complexifying identities is a process by which perceptions about the self and others are being discarded and at the same time new beliefs are being adopted. It is a process that stands in constant tension with a strong desire for belonging (Anckermann, et al., 2005, pp. 145-146; Shalev & Errera, 2008, p. 164) and being part of a group that offers reliable boundaries. Traumatic events deeply shatter the sense of safety; consequently they trigger a desperate search for trustworthy relations and well defined worldviews. However, complexifying identities requires engaging in a process of letting go of former beliefs, discarding part of the previous identity and simultaneously exploring and adopting new identity patterns (Schirch, 2008, p. 93). Schirch emphasises that "trauma healing and identity transformation are a learning process" (ibid.). And this means that it is a time consuming endeavour which is especially true for identity development. An individual or a community oscillates between fear and retreat on the one hand and the desire to understand more about the self, one's community and others on the other. Intense feelings of shame may arise resulting from atrocities endured or committed and affecting the process of complexifying identities. Unresolved shame could lead to projection, humiliation of others, contempt, cynicism, violence, and attempts to restore a perceived loss of honour (Marks, 2009). But acknowledging feelings of shame (ibid., p. 156) and "working them through" (ibid., p. 164) supports the recovery. Marks explains that "working through" means to "empty the 'pond' full of shame, which is in us, bucket by bucket. With every bucket the shape of what we haven't developed out of shame but banished to the ground of our souls becomes clearer: Abandoned wishes, dismissed aspirations, oppressed capabilities" (ibid., p. 165)[52]. Conflicts that lasted over a long period of time and that have become a chosen trauma need to be redefined into a new story that incorporates competing views and does not take hostage an entire community or nation by promoting simplistic solutions.

[52] "Durcharbeiten bedeutet, den 'Teich' voller Scham, der in uns ist, Eimer für Eimer auszuschöpfen. Mit jedem Schöpfen werden deutlicher die Umrisse dessen sichtbar, was wir aus Scham nicht entwickelt, sondern auf den Grund unserer Seele verbannt haben: verlassene Wünsche, aufgegebene Sehnsüchte, weggedrückte Potenziale."

It is a huge challenge to complexify identities, to adopt new belief systems about the self, one's community and others, and to abandon antagonistic narratives and feelings of humiliation and victimhood. Amartya Sen (2006) suggests placing an emphasis on "competing identities" (p. 3). This means that individuals choose the characteristics of their identity perception from a wide variety of categories. This may include identities that many others share but also may involve choosing to belong to a variety of additional groups (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 62; Sen, 2006, p. 4)[53]. The sum of the chosen group memberships forms the particular identity. These choices and priorities of attachments to the different affiliations are being constantly revised (Sen, 2006, p. 5). They are influenced by new experiences and by the way they are seen by the environment. The expectations and classification that others place upon one's identity, in particular, place some constraints on the possibility of choice (ibid.). It makes reason-based choices difficult if an individual is trapped in an "us versus them" narrative. Yet Sen emphasises that choice remains possible and that identity is not destiny (ibid., p. 17). Even if one's own background strongly influences any identity based choice, "the ability to doubt and to question is not beyond our reach" (ibid., p. 35). Sen argues that a "person has to make choices – explicitly or by implication – about what relative importance to attach, in a particular context, to the divergent loyalties and priorities that may compete for precedence" (ibid., p. 19). Complexifying identities therefore means to resist singular categorisation and take into account a wide variety of individual and societal achievements that are part of a person's identity.

It is tempting to define identity solely in terms of religion or ethnicity because they are easy to recognise and often confined to a certain geographical area (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 62). It has to be admitted that membership of these groups has a strong influence on identity perception and may lead to the erosion of other identifications like a common humanity or other common characteristics (ibid., p. 68). Complexifying identity has to consider the individual's deep desire for belonging and has to provide a safe environment that reduces the fear of identity loss and allows individuals to choose their attachments freely. This emphasises the above mentioned necessity to discuss trauma coping strategies within a human rights framework that assures that crucial freedom rights are respected. Sen (2006) notes: "The main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies in the plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and work against

[53] Sen (2006) mentions a person's citizenship, residence, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sport interests, taste, music, and social commitments (pp. 4-5). Nussbaum (2003) notes: "for many people, their most fundamental identifications may be with groups that I shall henceforth call 'dispersed groups' – groups that are communities of interest and aspiration across regional and even national boundaries" (p. 62).

sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted" (p. 16).

Complexifying identities humanises others (Staub, 2007, p. 339). Programmes that increase knowledge about the other and foster an "awareness of shared needs" helps us to appreciate them more (ibid., p. 341). Humanising others can be achieved by "creating a constructive, inclusive ideology that includes mutual understanding, accommodation, and a shared vision of a good society to which all groups can contribute" (ibid.). This includes talking about "values, beliefs, and customs, acknowledging and engaging with differences, while considering accommodation, common ground, and the aim of developing positive social arrangements that encompass all groups" (ibid., pp. 341-342). In addition the installation of justice processes are helpful so that victims can tell their stories in a safe environment as an effort to "re-humanize" individuals and large groups (Hart, 2008a, p. 121) and as an acknowledgement of losses and pain.

These different measures require educational efforts – throughout all ages and societal groups. Not only is knowledge about others essential, but so also is knowing how group dynamics work and about "the psychological, cultural, and social influences that generate hostility and lead to violence" (Staub, 2007, p. 352). This includes developing "active, positive bystandership" (ibid.. p. 347), speaking out against injustice, devaluation and verbal or physical attacks (ibid.) by fostering "moral values, empathy, sympathy, and caring about the welfare of people outside one's narrowly defined group" (ibid., p. 348)[54].

In order to break the cycle of trauma, three main aspects have been discussed: dealing with difficult life conditions, healing past wounds, and complexifying identities. These aspects have the potential to restore identities, to un-freeze them, and to restore community. Restorative identities develop in an environment of good life conditions, where the persons' own capabilities can be developed. Restorative identities deal with the past by engaging in a meaning-finding process leading to narratives that foster resilience. Restorative identities permit a plurality of attachments to different groups and interests and they emphasise one's own humanity by allowing the admission of multiple attachments. At the same time others are humanised by being aware of a wide variety of identity patterns that overlap with parts of one's own identity.

[54] Religious leaders can serve as an example by promoting ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and thus reducing destructive narratives. Christian leaders should emphasise topics like peaceful relationships and love of their enemies into their teachings and help their congregations to overcome devaluing narratives (Kreider, Kreider, & Widjaja, 2005).

Most individuals and communities who went through traumatic events need some sort of assistance in the coping process. In the following section the intervention role of external experts and local leaders will be discussed.

3.3 External intervention

Most approaches to intervention focus primarily on the need for psychotherapeutic treatment. Although a number of victims need therapeutic help, “the majority will cope with recovery as a collective activity seeking assistance directed primarily at their social rather than mental lives” (Summerfield, 1995, p. 28). Sometimes it is even best not to intervene too much (Errante, 1997, p. 368) but to serve as a catalyst so that individuals and communities discover their own resources for recovery (Dass-Brailsford, 2010b, p. 56). Crisis responders should therefore refrain from making major changes when intervening (ibid.). Too many intervention activities could give the impression that whole communities are being pathologised. As a consequence a culture of victimhood could develop (Errante, 1997, p. 368). Usually communities develop strategies over time to lessen the effects of trauma. Cultural systems of support are set up to provide help in the coping process. (Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 21). Hence, it is crucial to balance carefully the extent of interventions, to conduct interventions in a culturally adequate manner and to promote ownership of the intervention measures.

In this respect Dass-Brailsford (2010b) remarks that a sensitivity “to the unique experiences, beliefs, norms, values, traditions, customs, and language of survivors” is decisive (ibid., p. 57). Although some concepts seem to be universal and not attached to a certain culture (the concept of stress, disaster and crisis, the importance of resources, adaptation, wellness, economic development, social capital, communication, and competence), the interpretation and the implementation of these concepts can vary significantly and be subject to long-held traditions and cultural norms (Norris, et al., 2008, p. 145). For this reason, Dass-Brailsford (2010b) suggests that those who are helping should find out as much as possible about the community and individuals with whom they will be working before implementing intervention strategies (p. 59).

As a result of culturally adequate intervention, high levels of community ownership of these measures are possible. Systems which take into consideration local values and priorities are more likely to succeed than those which ignore them (Fairbank, et al., 2003, p. 62). Ownership

can be achieved by involving as many population segments as possible – people of different gender, age and professional background – in the development of strategies to rebuild the community (ibid.). Kantowitz and Riak (2008) emphasise that if reconciliation after traumatic events is ever to happen, it "needs to be meaningful at the grassroots level" (p. 22). Participation gives traumatised communities agency after having experienced a deep sense of helplessness (ibid., p. 8)[55].

A community that recovers agency is able to regain the political will for promoting individual and societal healing. The leaders' role within the intervention efforts is to mitigate anger and encourage recovery efforts. Their determination to take the journey towards healing should inspire others (Webb, 2004a, p. 40). This includes providing time and space for mourning (Audergon, 2004; Becker, 2006; Volkan, 1997). Memorial days recognise and acknowledge the feelings which arise at certain anniversaries and honour the passing of loved ones (Dass-Brailsford, 2010c, pp. 44-45). After severe trauma, a society may need memorial activities for many years (Volkan, 1997, p. 40)[56].

Community leaders and external experts will find the mass media helpful for their intervention efforts. Schirch (2008) explains that "artistic mediums like TV shows, movies, music, and novels can pave a new pathway for people's perceptions of their own and other's identity and to symbolically mourn and process their trauma" (ibid., p. 93; cf.Volkan, 1997, p. 40). According to Schirch, art, transmitted through the mass media,

> "can substitute for violent forms of communication and thus interrupt the cycle of trauma and violence. People in conflict often take on a victim identity that serves as a justification for aggressive actions against those perceived to be their oppressors. Art is a vehicle to restore a more complex understanding of identity for groups that have been victimized" (ibid., p. 93).

In recent years the role of the international community has been increasingly discussed. One question raised is about how the international community could prevent mass atrocity crimes in

[55] Anckermann (2005) lists possible strategies that enhance ownership and serve as protective factors. These strategies include community meetings to discuss the problems they are facing, telling and listening to each other's stories, reframing of these stories into a meaningful and coherent narrative, fostering social coherence, mutual support, and a sense of belonging. (ibid., pp. 145-146) Ager (1997) includes family reunification programmes and community-development initiatives. (ibid., p. 405) Pedersen (2008) adds "local mechanisms for conflict resolution and public assemblies for local administration of justice, community based mechanisms for appeasement and reconciliation, [and] spontaneous forms of symbolic restoration" (ibid., p. 214).

[56] Volkan (1997) observed that the mourning process of the US-society was greatly helped by the construction of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D. C. (ibid., p. 40).

violent or fragile states. The UN World Summit in 2005 accepted the norm "responsibility to protect" as an obligation to protect groups who are in danger and "to act decisively and to rescue those who are attacked" (Rotberg, 2010, p. 12). Indictments and prosecution are meant to help to reduce war crimes and to "limit the proliferation of atrocity crimes" (ibid., p. 11). Military intervention is only considered, if "mass killings were actual or imminent" (ibid.). Yet, Rotberg argues,

> "the work of preventing mass atrocity crimes is very much in embryo. (...) Too many nation-states still embrace sovereignty instead of protection for innocent civilians. Too many others are indifferent or hesitant. Hence, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and political groups remain as much at risk as they have been for decades" (2010, p. 21).

In spite of all the communal, societal and even global efforts in helping to overcome trauma, intervention with the traumatised individual is still necessary – in the form of therapeutic and spiritual care. Therapeutic intervention is especially needed in the case of chronic traumatisation. Therapeutic approaches to treating PTSD can help to stabilise the patient and to integrate the traumatic events into the patient's life story (Gast, 2009, p. 73). This stabilisation process could take up to several years and aims to assist the individual in gaining control over their symptoms and their traumatic memories (ibid.). The patient learns within the therapeutic process to gradually abandon a "get rid of" coping strategy, in other words, to end a state of dissociation and to replace it with other strategies (ibid.). The patient has to understand that dissociation was helpful as an emergency reaction but over time it will result in dysfunctional behaviour as different parts of their personality act independently and more often than not against each other (ibid.). As soon as there is sufficient communication between the different parts of the dissociated personality the therapy can proceed cautiously with the reprocessing of the traumatic event (ibid.). Ultimately, successful therapy leads to the point where traumatic events cease to torment the patient and can be remembered without adverse effects (Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 17). Thus, a new narrative emerges (Peichl, 2009, p. 117).

The role of a spiritual caregiver is to invite the patient to participate in God's care for the world in Jesus Christ. Rogers (2002) reminds the caregivers that "God calls us to walk with the wounded as living reminders of God's love; offering guidance, support, and hope for their spiritual journey to full recovery" (p. 106). This means listening, discussing the spiritual questions that arise and

in general providing a safe place (ibid., p. 58). Much depends on just being present, “which is more a matter of being than doing” (ibid.). Spiritual or pastoral care then “depends on prayer, leads to worship, and trusts in the promises of God” (Deusen Hunsinger, 2011, p. 9). At the same time the caregivers should be aware of their limitations, with their “enduring failures to love” and their inability to “truly redeem traumatic loss” (ibid.). Bearing in mind that it is only God “who can and does” as he “drank the cup of bitterness, died a death of anguish, and descends into every darkness that threatens to overwhelm us” (ibid.), a pastoral caregiver can be a source of spiritual strength for individuals as well as for the communities they serve.

External intervention, be it on an individual level or on a societal level, is a source of hope that there are other people who care and who validate the feelings of the victims about the wrongdoing that happened. All too often bystanders do not care and turn a blind eye to the suffering of others. Intervening to assist the trauma coping process is a form of advocacy that increases awareness of injustice and ultimately could help the victims to stand up against oppression restoring their own identities and opening the way for restored relationships.

In the following section an example is given illustrating the previous findings of this research. The occurrences in Rwanda in 1994 have been widely researched and show the strong influence communal trauma had on the onset of the violence. The subsequent coping and reconciliation process has gained enormous attention because of the unique approach in dealing with the past.

3.4 Trauma and coping in Rwanda

The genocide started in April 1994, when members of the Hutu majority killed more than 1.1 million people, belonging mostly to the Tutsi minority. However, the root causes date a lot further back.

Pre-colonial Rwanda was a rigidly stratified society in which the Hutu majority was “at the bottom of the heap, socially, economically and politically” (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 405). Nevertheless Hutu and Tutsi had the “same language and culture; the same clan names, the same customs” (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 405; Staub, Pearlman, & Bilali, 2008, p. 132). The differences consisted mainly in class, power and social identities (Staub, et al., 2008, p. 133), yet there were no fixed conflict lines. Conflicts happened between groups as much as within a group (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 405).

The Belgian colonial state began reshaping and mythologising ethnic identities (ibid.), developing a racist ideology of Tutsi superiority (Staub, et al., 2008, p. 133). Christian missionaries began speculations about a different origin of the Tutsi, "drawing attention to the distinctively Ethiopian features, and hence the foreign origins, of the Tutsi 'caste'" (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 405). This provided the ideological basis for the Hutu revolution in 1959 and reappeared in 1994 "in the form of a violently anti-Tutsi propaganda" (ibid.). Identity cards were issued in which the ethnic background was specified – a practice that was kept until 1994, "when 'tribal cards' often spelled the difference between life and death"(ibid.).

In the mid 1950s Belgian policies changed radically. Democracy became more important and subsequently this led to increased Hutu participation in society and particularly in education. Immediate resistance to this development came from the ruling Tutsi. In 1959 a violent outbreak of ethnic tensions began, leading to a Belgian-assisted coup which "abolished the [Tutsi] monarchy and led to the proclamation of a de-facto republican regime under Hutu rule" (ibid., p. 406). Approximately 200,000 Tutsi were forced into exile which planted the seeds for the creation of the *Front Patriotique Rwandais* (FPR) in 1989 with the aim of preparing for return to their country (ibid.). Lemarchand comments: "Few would have imagined that 30 years later the sons of the refugee diaspora in Uganda would form the nucleus of a Tutsi-dominated politico-military organization (...) that would successfully fight its way back into the country" (ibid., p. 404).

The FPR's invasion began in 1990 accompanied by violent acts against the Hutu population and retaliatory acts of mass killings of Tutsi by the Rwandan government. Thousands had to flee and were brought into refugee camps (Lemarchand, 2009, pp. 407-408). In 1991 several new political parties emerged in Rwanda adding to the insecurity brought about by the FPR invasion in the north. The external and internal threats instigated fear in the ruling party *Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement* (MRND) as the new parties were seen as potential allies with the FPR (ibid., p. 407).

During the following years the genocide was planned carefully. The MRND started to set up militia groups recruiting particularly from the internally displaced Hutu who lived in refugee camps after having fled from the FPR rebels. The situation in the camps was extremely harsh so that young volunteers for the militias could easily be found (ibid., p. 408). Lemarchand

remarks, that the genocide cannot be reduced to blind fury after the "shooting down of President Juvenal Habyarima's plane on April 6, 1994" (ibid., p. 405). It was planned by a group consisting of a small circle around President Habyarima's wife and his three brothers-in-law, rural organisers, the militias, and the presidential guard (ibid., pp. 408-409). By 1992 the institutional prerequisites for the genocide were in place (ibid., p. 408). In 1994 the "systemic massacre of innocent civilians" took place (ibid., p. 405).

Many intellectuals and professional people took part in the slaughter, in addition to "hundreds and thousands of landless Hutu peasants and unemployed city youth whose prime motivation for killing was to steal their victim's property, their land, their furniture, their radio, or what little cash they happened to carry." (ibid., p. 409).

3.4.1 The unfolding genocide

Different factors contributed to the start of the genocide. In the Arusha peace accords[57], signed in 1993, the parties consented – under considerable pressure – to the decision that the FPR was entitled to the same number of seats in the government as the ruling party (MRND), and in addition it would "contribute 40 Percent of the troops and 50 percent of the officer corps to the new Rwandan army" (ibid.). For the hardliners in the Hutu community this was not acceptable. They tried to disrupt the peace process by instigating violence and committing random killings of innocent civilians (ibid.). A further setback for the peace process was the killing of the newly elected Burundi President Melchior Ndadaye by the all-Tutsi army of Burundi. Being a Hutu, his election had brought to an end a 28 year long Tutsi dominance. His killing seemed to provide proof for the Hutus in Rwanda Tutsis could not be trusted (ibid.).

When the Rwandan presidential plane was shot down it set off the mass killing – yet not as an instant and massive butchery. Lemarchande argues that continuing power struggles in many communes during the first days makes it probable "that a more determined stance on the part of the international community would have prevented the worst from happening" (ibid., p. 411). It began with the elimination of Hutu and Tutsi moderates and opposition leaders. Then it spread all over the country supported by the agitating media (ibid., p. 412).

[57] In July 1992 peace talks began between the Rwandan government and the FPR in Arusha, Tanzania, led by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and supported by the United Nations (UN) (Andersen, 2000, p. 444).

The genocide ended with the victory of the FPR, who gained control over the whole country. Yet, security for Tutsis was only gradually established. Assaults from the Congo on Rwanda continued until 1999 (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005, p. 302).

3.4.2 Understanding the genocide

Rwanda shows a long history of devaluation and dehumanisation of the enemy. On both sides the "enemy was demonized, made the incarnation of the evil, and dealt with accordingly" (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 404), which resulted in unspeakable violence during the 1994 genocide. Lemarchand argues that the root causes of the genocide lie in mythologising and manipulating collective identity: "Tutsi are seen by many Hutu as culturally alien to Rwanda, their presence traceable to 'Hamitic invaders from the north' who used ruse and cunning (...) to enslave the unsuspecting Hutu agriculturalists" (ibid., p. 406). Only the Hutu are seen as real Rwandans (ibid.), although there is no evidence whatsoever that these classifications are true (ibid.). Yet these classifications are part of the "cognitive map of Hutu ideologues" (ibid.). As a result the Tutsi were considered not to be legitimate members of the national community and to be a constant threat for the rest of the community (ibid., p. 407). Hutu leaders therefore instilled fear of the Tutsi by proclaiming: "Either we kill them first, or else we'll be killed" (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 410). No alternative was left in this "security dilemma" but to "annihilate the enemies of the nation, the Tutsi" (ibid.).Only physical liquidation could solve this situation (ibid.). The oppressed stepped into the position of the oppressor (Fierke, 2004, p. 488).

Schirch (2008) described this behaviour as the creation of "mirror images of victimhood and good versus evil perceptions of identity" (ibid., p. 91). "Purely good self images" emerge and evil images of others as part of a revenge-based attitude towards the enemy (ibid., p. 89). Collective narratives appear with a strong dualism and dehumanising tendencies (Volkan, 2006, p. 121).

Volkan (2010) coined this phenomenon a "large-group regression" which draws on the "chosen traumas" of past conflicts and aggression (p. 50). Luhrmann's (2000) description of community trauma as a "sense of distress [and] humiliation" (p. 184) also describes accurately the situation in Rwanda. Consequently, to prevent similar humiliation, violence became acceptable, even inevitable. Traumatic events that lay dormant over long periods of time, were reactivated (Volkan, 2010, p. 54). The children of the Tutsi who had to flee to Uganda came back to regain what was lost. It was an attempt to reinstall justice and counteract injustice (Gilligan, 1997, p.

12) as part of a legitimate entitlement (Volkan, 2010, p. 53). The Hutu, on the other hand, found their narratives and perceptions of the Tutsi, as being foreign invaders, confirmed.

Apart from the issues of identity, social hardship has been widely recognised as a main factor for the emergence of violent behaviour (Bodenhamer, 2006; Schmidt & Bloemertz, 2005; Sherman, et al., 1998; Staub, 2007; Whitzman, 2008). The situation in the refugee camps for the Hutu refugees, fleeing from the FPR invasion in the north of Rwanda serves as an example. Refugees were in constant danger of attacks, their health situation was dire and the mortality rate was high. Families were separated and schooling was suspended (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 408). Consequently, violence increased and, as Lemarchand argues, "it is hardly a coincidence that among the scores of young thugs manning the checkpoints in the capital, the vast majority were recruited among the IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] of the Nyacinga camp, near Kigali" (ibid.).

The role of the church is particularly disturbing. Rwanda is a country with around 90 percent claiming membership of one of the Christian churches (Longman, 2010, p. 4). Longman observes that

> "not only were the vast majority of those who participated in the killings Christians, but the church buildings themselves also served as Rwanda's primary killing fields. (...) Organizers of the genocide exploited the historic concept of sanctuary to lure tens of thousands of Tutsi into church buildings with false promises of protection; then Hutu militia and soldiers systematically slaughtered the unfortunate people who had sought refuge" (ibid., pp. 4-5).

In general, church officials denied any institutional responsibility and blamed individuals for having acted in a non-Christian way, thus, revealing a shallow commitment towards their belief (ibid., p. 8). Consequently, these perpetrators should not be called Christians (ibid., p. 9). Longman, however, believes that the churches' involvement in the genocide was more than the actions of some individuals. He is convinced that "the churches actively shaped the ethnic and political realities that made genocide possible by acting to define and politicize ethnicity, legitimizing authoritarian regimes, and encouraging public obedience to political authorities" (ibid., p. 10). Even though all churches had mixed ethnicity, their respective church affiliation did not serve as a common identifier (ibid., p. 18). On the contrary,

> "church personnel in Rwanda supported ethnic violence, repression of the democracy movement, and, eventually, genocide in part because of fears of losing control over their institutions and access to the benefits and privileges that they had until then enjoyed" (ibid., p. 309).

As officially church leaders morally sanctioned the genocide, large parts of the population felt free to participate in the killings (ibid., p. 319). Longman concludes: "In Rwanda, unfortunately, the Golden Rule taught by the churches was not 'love your neighbor as yourself', but 'obey those in authority'" (ibid.). If the church had used their moral authority it could have helped "to diminish the intensity of violence or to prevent it altogether" (ibid., p. 321).

In addition, the international community had an unfortunate role. As mentioned above, a more determined reaction to the killings by the international community could have reduced considerably the extent of the killings (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 411). Reyntjens (2004) points out that "although the violence could be seen almost live on television, the international community did nothing to stop the carnage" (p. 177). The United Nations peace-keeping mission UNAMIR[58], based in Rwanda to monitor the implementation of the Arusha accords, had to operate under the difficult conditions of a weak mandate and a deeply divided international community on how to react to the unfolding genocide (Carlsson, 2005). Consequently, the UN was heavily criticised and UNAMIR regarded as a complete failure (Reyntjens, 2004, p. 177). The resulting feelings of shame and guilt provided an additional obstacle to the international community in their efforts to actively support the victims, regardless of their ethnicity. Rotberg's (2010) remark that nation-states are hesitant to protect innocent civilians in other countries, has been proved right (p. 21).

All these events demonstrate the consequences of the cycle of trauma and violence, developed by Botcharova (C. Yoder, 2005, p. 38; Zehr, 2008, p. 11).Personal trauma develops into fantasies of revenge, the group see themselves as victims, a feature which becomes part of an increased group identity. Narratives of good versus evil develop in conjunction with unmet needs for justice and safety, and with shame, humiliation and fear. The enemy is dehumanised and in the end, violence is seen as redemptive. Attacking the enemy in the name of self-defence, justice or restoring honour involves the decision to pursue their own needs at the

[58] United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.

expense of others. Identities stay uni-dimensional and neither the warring parties nor the international community sought to break the cycle of trauma by complexifying identities, improving living conditions for the disadvantaged, or dealing with the past.

3.4.3 Coping with trauma

The reconciliation process started slowly. In order to fight impunity the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was set up in Arusha, Tanzania as well as local tribunals (the *gacaca* tribunals[59]), where people could tell their stories and where cases of killing were dealt with (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 413). Staub (2008) reports from the *gacaca* processes that "many people feel safe enough to engage" (p. 134) in reconciliation processes. The feelings of safety were strengthened and this encouraged further healing (ibid.).

After the victory, the FPR government agreed to implement the Arusha Accord. Yet several amendments imposed the dominance of FPR's political power (Reyntjens, 2004, p. 178). The Rwandan government took actions against opposition parties that were being accused of divisionism (Staub, et al., 2005, p. 302). The FPR-dominated government became ever more authoritarian and repressive, forcing many people, even from within the ruling party, into exile. Among them were "government ministers, senior judges, high-ranking civil servants, diplomats, army officers, journalists, leaders of civil society and even players in the national soccer team" (Reyntjens, 2004, p. 180). Opposition parties were banned or restricted in their activities, opponents "disappeared" and civil society was intimidated (ibid., p. 185).

In addition random killings were widespread, of Tutsis to prevent them from testifying in the *gacaca* processes (Staub, et al., 2005, p. 302) but also of many Hutus. Particularly between 1997 and 1998 thousands of Hutu civilians were killed (Reyntjens, 2004, p. 195). Reyntjens notes that "provincial governors (*préfets*), local mayors, head teachers, clerics and judges were killed in increasing numbers" (ibid., p. 180). In most cases the *Armée Patriotique Rwandaise* (APR, the new national army), which was dominated by the FPR, was responsible (ibid.).

Admittedly there were promising developments, namely institution building and the high involvement of women – "half the seats in the National Assembly and almost one-third of the portfolios in the new government" (ibid., p. 187) were occupied by women in 2003. In addition

[59] Grass-root tribunals, named after the traditional councils that handled local conflicts (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 413). The jurisdiction of the courts in Rwanda was shifted to the *gacaca* tribunals in order to be able to deal with the large number of cases involving accusations of genocide, to fight impunity, and to foster reconciliation within the local communities (ibid.).

Hutus were well represented in the government and held “15 out of 29 positions in the government, and even 13 out of 18 ministerial portfolios” (ibid.).

Yet, the positions with access to wealth, power and knowledge were increasingly reserved for Tutsis (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 415; Reyntjens, 2004, p. 187) thus undermining the Arusha agreement. Officially any ethnical factor is denied. However, this denial is used to hide the domination by the Tutsi minority and is a “tool for the monopolization of power in the hands of a small group” (ibid.). Lemarchand (2009) perceives a “thinly veiled military ethnocracy, which rules through fear, assassination and intimidation” and points out that “all dissenting voices have been silenced through the ever-present threat of being accused of ‘divisionism’” (ibid., p. 415). The International Crisis Group (2002) remarks in its report from 2002 that the independent press has been silenced and that “in the name of unity and national reconciliation, the various segments of Rwandan society are subjected to a paternalistic and authoritarian doctrine and cannot express themselves freely” (p. i). As a consequence, bi-ethnic opposition parties and platforms emerged outside of Rwanda which was a considerable challenge to the ruling FPR (Reyntjens, 2004, p. 191).

Reyntjens perceives a “striking continuity from the pre-genocide to the post-genocide regime in Rwanda” (2004, p. 208). Both manipulated ethnicity – the FPR “by discriminating against the Hutu under the guise of ethnic amnesia” – and both used large-scale violence with total impunity (ibid.). All this fuels concern about another outbreak of violence in the country (ibid., p. 210). This is underscored by ethnic tensions with dozens of reported deaths, which indicates “the very real potential for renewed large scale violence in Rwanda” (Arnold, 2011, p. 309).

The policy of repudiating any ethnicity was meant to prevent devaluation of the other and to encourage people to see the other primarily as a fellow human being and not as a member of an ethnic group. This could have contributed to the humanising efforts and is a way of complexifying identities. The hidden ethnicity that gives power only to a certain group, however, works against these efforts and dissolves what was gained. Yet if pluralistic structures and processes were to be established, new violence could be prevented. A diverse set of checks and balances could have prevented the secret planning of the genocide by a small group in 1994. The feeling that parts of the population are once again being excluded from the decision making process could stir dissatisfaction and unrest. The current oppression of pluralistic

structures and opposition parties in Rwanda by the ruling party (FPR) is therefore an obstacle to the healing process. Reyntjens (2004) believes that a conspiracy of silence from the international community allowed the new government to turn from victim into perpetrator (p. 198). Guilt, political correctness and the fear of having to leave the country led many observers and NGO representatives to close their eyes and keep silent (ibid.). In addition the “genocide credit” (ibid., p. 199) became an ideological weapon for the FPR to “acquire and maintain victim status and, as a perceived form of compensation, to enjoy complete immunity” (ibid.). Key military Tutsi officers who participated in the killing of tens of thousands of Hutu civilians could not be tried (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 414).

As shown before, coping with trauma through dealing with difficult life conditions is at its core a human rights issue. The development of the individual’s capabilities and the provision of freedom both support the trauma coping process. The Rwandan government’s refusal to deal with human rights abuses and their rejection of any criticism by the international community (Reyntjens, 2004, pp. 203-204) pose a serious threat for improving life conditions in Rwanda.

The coping process is further complicated by a narrow perception of identities due to the survivors’ experience of intense individual trauma symptoms “like nightmares, flashbacks, and emotional numbing as well as disruption in the survivor’s world view, [and] relationships with self and others” (Staub, et al., 2008, p. 133). The world is still perceived as dangerous and people outside one’s own group are not trustworthy (ibid.). Survivors are extremely sensitive to threats and have difficulties understanding others in the case of conflicts (ibid., p. 134). Staub et al. note that “in response to new threat or conflict they may believe they need to defend themselves even when violent self-defense is not necessary, and may strike out, in the process becoming perpetrators” (ibid.).

The impact on perpetrators is severe and characterised by self-justification as they have often endured atrocities and traumatic experiences themselves (ibid.). “To protect themselves from the emotional consequences of their actions, perpetrators often continue to blame victims and hold on to the ideology that in part motivated, and to them justified, their violence” (Staub, et al., 2005, p. 303).

The psychological effects of being a passive bystander are similar to the effects of perpetration. Bystanders are likely to accept justifications offered by the perpetrators, distancing themselves

from the victims (ibid.). Sometimes they believe that if the victims had not done anything wrong they would not suffer (ibid.). Passivity of bystanders is the norm even though some risk their lives to help others (ibid.).

The influence of the individual trauma on a society's coping process is highlighted by research into the prevalence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder or related symptoms several years after the genocide. Pham, Weinstein, and Longman (2004) found a correlation "between symptoms of PTSD, judicial attitudes, and openness to reconciliation. Those who met the PTSD symptom criteria were less likely to support the Rwandan national trials, believe in community, and demonstrate interdependence with other ethnic groups" (ibid., p. 611). Several studies found high levels of PTSD symptoms in the Rwandan population. Neugebauer, Fisher, Turner, Yamabe, Sarsfield, and Stehling-Ariza (2009) investigated the prevalence of PTSD symptoms in children and adolescents a year after the genocide in 1994 in Rwanda. The results show that most children suffered from re-experiencing, avoidance/numbing and arousal. Between 54 and 62 percent of the participants met the criteria for "probable PTSD"[60] (p. 1043). Noteworthy was the fact that every one of those who experienced the highest level of exposure to traumatic events exhibited "probable PTSD" (ibid., p. 1041). The researchers conclude that if violence reaches a certain level, normal levels of resilience are incapable of protecting against PTSD symptoms (ibid., p. 1042).

Eight years after the genocide Pham et al. studied the prevalence of PTSD related symptoms again. While 94 % of the respondents reported having at least experienced one traumatic event, approximate 25 % showed symptoms which meet the criteria for PTSD (2004, p. 610). The targeted group, the Tutsi, especially showed an increase in PTSD symptoms (ibid.). Brounéus' (2010) study four years later (2006) confirms these findings (27 % prevalence of PTSD symptoms) (p. 420). Many suffer from re-experiencing (79 %), avoidance or numbing (41 %), hyper-arousal (40 %), and depression (60 %) (ibid., p. 419). It is striking that levels of PTSD symptoms and depression have not decreased over time (ibid., p. 429). Brounéus argues that the *gacaca* processes of truth telling put an extra stress on the population so that the processing of trauma was more difficult for witnesses (ibid.).

[60] "Individuals meeting assessed PTSD diagnostic criteria are classified as cases of 'probable PTSD'" (Neugebauer, et al., 2009, p. 1033).

However, there are also hopeful signs of coping and identity formation. The use of mass media was helpful in the process of complexifying identities. In the aftermath of the genocide public education campaigns via radio broadcasting helped people to understand the causes of violence. Educational messages were included in a widely listened to soap opera. The soap opera dealt with topics like: devaluation and humanisation and their effect on violence; the value of healing psychological wounds; the danger of passivity; the importance of varied perspectives, open communication and moderate respect for authority (Staub, et al., 2008, p. 146).

Although a number of trauma coping efforts have been undertaken during the years following the genocide, many wounds of the past still need more time to heal. Fierke (2004) argues that when a community cannot find adaptive solutions that help to cope with the events, the trauma becomes a part of the cultural identity and influences the group even long after the traumatic event happened and the physical danger disappeared (p. 488; cf. Volkan, 2010). Losses, feelings of humiliation, and the traumatised self-images are "passed down to later generations" (Volkan, 1997, p. 45). Mourning processes which could have supported the healing process were disrupted in the case of Rwanda. Burial ceremonies, for example, often could not be performed in Rwanda because the families were unable to find the members who were killed in the genocide (Arnold, 2011, p. 309). Again Volkan (1997) emphasises, "humans cannot accept change without mourning what has been lost" (ibid., p. 36). As a consequence, by not being able to mourn their dead, a sense of coherence is missing in the communities, "perpetuating the manifestation of individual trauma" (Arnold, 2011, p. 309).

Rwanda has become an example for having endured a trauma cycle over many decades. Its efforts to break the cycle have been at best half-hearted. Effective institution building helped to improve life conditions, setting up justice processes acknowledged losses and pain, and dealing with ethnicity and educating the public about the sources of the genocide helped to broaden the perceptions of one's own and the other group's identity. Unfortunately, these promising approaches were counteracted by the Government's refusal to improve human rights conditions by undermining the rule of law and thus limiting society's capabilities. The hidden form of ethnocracy perpetuates antagonistic narratives and impedes the emergence of new meaning systems and new narratives that could restore relations and pave the way for reconciliation.

3.5 Summary

Breaking the cycle of trauma is a difficult and time consuming task. Nonetheless, the trauma cycle can be broken. The cycle of humiliation, loss of agency, feelings of inferiority, emerging fantasies of doing justice through revenge, and the development of uni-dimensional narratives and an oversimplified description of the other leading to eruptions of violence can be stopped.

A key element towards reaching this aim is to restore identities, i.e. to develop identities that restore the self, relations to others and a community. These restorative identities require life conditions that support personal development. They entail strategies for healing past wounds by finding new meaning and new narratives. Restorative identities are based upon multiple attachments that value the fact that others choose different sets of attachments which form their identity.

These factors of building restorative identities open a vast field of possible intervention measures. Poverty reduction, education, institution building, rule of law, developing an inclusive history, mourning processes, community development programmes, psychotherapeutic interventions, and spiritual care are just a few examples.

Most important though is an awareness of the need for a multifaceted approach. A lack of attention in one area could easily undo the accomplishments of another. Dealing with wounds of the past in an environment that cannot provide safety is extremely difficult. Complexifying identities in a setting that is characterised by humiliation and exclusion could hardly be effective. Rwanda is an example of how difficult efforts to cope with trauma are.

Chapter 4 Guatemala: a case study

The following case study of interviews conducted by the author in January and February 2012 in Guatemala, highlights the traumatic occurrences and the attempts to cope with the past of yet another country. The history of violence in Guatemala has not been at the centre of scientific research much less in the news reports. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken in order to unravel the causes of war and violence in this country. Numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations within the country have been active in trying to understand the lessons from the country's history and to provide support both for individuals and for the society that has suffered from century-long conflicts.

The Guatemalan situation is exemplary for a number of other countries. Honduras and El Salvador are geographically and historically closest to Guatemala, but also numerous other countries face similar challenges and suffer from the consequences of state-inflicted violence. Typically, these countries have high rates of violent crime (UNODC, 2011) and are confronted with huge social problems that obstruct the stabilisation of the country (Richani, 2007).

This research intends to help Guatemalan leaders to understand more deeply the traumatic consequences of protracted violence and the difficulties, which must be faced when embarking towards reconciliation. As stated before, the case study assesses signs of community trauma and analyses different strategies for recovery with a special emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation. This is done from two different angles: from the perspective of leaders of church-related organisations and from the perspective of non-church related organisations. The aim is, to encourage Guatemalan leaders to learn from each other and to re-evaluate their own strategy about dealing with traumatised communities.

4.1 Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction, the method used involved conducting qualitative interviews. The initial contact with possible interviewees was established by a personal contact, a Guatemalan psychologist and experienced in working with trauma people. The contact letter explained the aims of the project and gave an overview about interview process.

In total 28 interviews were conducted with people who were active in helping to overcome the consequences of the violence of the past. One group of interviewees (16) worked in a church-

related context (abbreviation of the interviews: C1, C2, ...), all others (12) worked in a primarily non-church related context (abbreviation of the interviews: NC1, NC2, ...)[61].

Most of the interviewees were leaders of organisations from the psychosocial area[62] (14) and a considerable number were leaders of educational institutions (8). Some of these leaders were also active pastors (6) leading congregations of various denominations (Church of the Nazarene, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic). A number of theses leaders were additionally engaged in the areas of peace work, advocacy, and promoting processes of justice and truth finding (9). Three participants were pastors dedicated mainly to leading congregations that had suffered severely during the internal armed conflict and, at the time of writing, still suffer from everyday violence. These pastors were active in different kinds of social projects; one of them was strongly active in the area of advocacy for the poor. Two participants were activists during the internal armed conflict, supporting the – mostly indigenous – victims. One participant led an organisation in the area of justice and one participant was an activist promoting the processes of reconciliation.

The participants' different backgrounds (governmental and non-governmental organisations, working in the capital or in rural areas, with religious and non-religious backgrounds, being indigenous or non-indigenous, local or foreigner) gave a broad spectrum of experiences representing a wide variety of social groups.

The participants were asked as experts in their field (psychology, sociology, theology, and law) to answer the questions in relation to the people they worked with and/or in relation to wider society. It was intended that the participants could state their view, from a – more or less – non-victim perspective, on what they thought was necessary to overcome community trauma and to proceed towards reconciliation. There are certainly only few experts who have not been affected by the different forms of violence that devastated the country. Therefore, some participants were able to answer the questions from two different angles: being an expert and at the same time having experienced persecution and/or loss.

The questions used during the interviews focused on three main areas, which are the core themes of this dissertation:

[61] This, however, does not mean that these interviewees have no affiliation to a church. Most Guatemalans belong to one of the numerous churches in Guatemala (U.S. Department of State, 2011).
[62] The interviewees worked as psychologists, social workers, and sociologists.

1. Signs of community trauma in Guatemala or in the smaller community, where the participants work, and strategies to overcome community trauma.
2. The role of forgiveness in dealing with the past.
3. The topic of reconciliation.

The participants were explicitly asked to give their own opinion and to voice what deems important to them. As mentioned in the introduction, it was necessary to take the specific background of the interviewee into account. Therefore, the focus of the interview varied according to interviewee's specific area of expertise (e. g. theology, psychology, law, etc.). This focus was mainly set by the interviewees' themselves as they were given the space to answer the open questions according to what seemed important to them. This meant, however, that each participant contributed to the knowledge in specific areas, not in the sense of "archaeological findings" that have been unearthed by the researcher without any subjective interference but rather a contribution to knowledge through a social process (Bogner & Menz, 2005, cited in Kruse, 2011, 274).

The interviews lasted approximately one hour each and were conducted mostly in the participants' offices that were predominantly located in the country's capital, Guatemala City. However, many interviewees worked for extensive periods of time in the country's rural areas, particularly in the regions that were most affected by the violence during the internal armed conflict. The violence took place during the second half of the last century.

The difficult topics made it necessary to grant the interviewees complete anonymity. Talking about the necessity of truth and combating impunity is potentially dangerous in a country that has not yet found peace in many areas of social life and where violence is the dominant approach when dealing with conflicts. While some of the participants were willing to share their statements publicly, others were glad that the interviews were confidential.

The interviews have been taped and later transcribed. The rules applied for the transcription process were based on the model described by Dresing and Pehl (2011) which is an adapted version of model developed by Kuckkartz, Dresing, Rädiker, and Stiefer (2008). The analysis of the data was supported by the qualitative research software NVivo.

4.2 Guiding questions for the data analysis

Three main sets of questions guide the analysis of the data:

1. Are there signs of traumatised communities in Guatemala? If so, what are these signs?
2. Which efforts have been undertaken to break the cycle of trauma? Were they successful?
3. How far have we come on the way towards reconciliation?

The first guiding question sets the ground: do the participants believe that the internal armed conflict led to a traumatisation of at least parts of the Guatemalan community? This question was at the same time a test for my hypothesis that Guatemalan society is indeed traumatised, and it sets the focus on the broader picture of societal health before entering into details of political and social life.

After this diagnosis the question of the remedy follows. The second guiding question of the analysis summarises the efforts that have already been undertaken to break the cycle of trauma. This question helps to open the field for investigating different approaches and their success, thus preventing a premature focus on specific solutions. The aim is to analyse which approaches towards recovery seem to be promising and which obstacles remain. This also deals with the question of the kind of recovery that the different parties in the country think to be necessary.

The last guiding question puts an emphasis on reconciliation. During the early days after the signing of the peace accords, many political actors appealed to the people to reconcile with each other. It is therefore necessary to discuss the role of reconciliation in the process of recovery in Guatemala. Is it possible to reach this aim and how should it be reached? Is the call for reconciliation an appropriate demand?

When discussing the roots of Guatemala's violent past many participants made references to the country's larger history. In their view, the *conquista*[63] and its consequences are to blame for the violence that shaped the whole region until the present day.

> "That was a foreign invasion with an army, with more powerful and sophisticated arms and all this, yes, it is an invasion and destroying our culture, the culture from here,

[63] In this context the *conquista* refers to the colonisation of the Americas by the Spanish in the 15th and 16th century.

because nothing was treated with respect (...) and after 500 years people are still suffering (...). There are 500 years of crushing"(C15, 2012)[64].

Suddaby remarks that qualitative interviews cannot be conducted as if "the researcher is a blank sheet devoid of experience or knowledge" (2006, p. 634). In contrast, it is necessary to consider prior research and knowledge and explicitly deal with this knowledge. Otherwise prior knowledge would remain implicit and influence the interpretation process in an unaccounted way. Conversely, theoretical grounding and accounted for prior knowledge increases the reliability of the research.

Therefore, before analysing the interviews, I will give a brief overview of Guatemala's history from the time of the Spanish arrival until the present time which helps to a better understanding of the interviewees' responses.

4.3 The history of violence in Guatemala

As in many cases of protracted conflicts, the history of Guatemala is highly disputed. There is a controversy about what happened, but mainly the dispute is about causes and consequences, and the interpretation of the historic occurrences. Each side claims to profess the "true" history in an objective way and thus supporting their political views through their historical analysis.[65] A far less biased approach to the clarification of the past was the *Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico* (Commission for Historical Clarification, CEH). Set up in 1997 as a part of the Oslo peace agreement between the Guatemalan Government and the guerrilla organisation URNG (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala*) (Tomuschat, 2001) its mandate was to clarify the events around the armed confrontation beginning in the year 1962 (CEH, 1999, Mandato y procedimiento de trabajo, sect. 23). The commission consisted of only three members having as its head the German law professor Christian Tomuschat. The different parties in Guatemala agreed that "an element of independence and impartiality was needed in order to shield the CEH from any suspicion of bias" (Tomuschat, 2001, p. 238). All three were chosen because of their neutral positions unbiased by political interests.

[64] "Eso fue una invasión extranjera con ejercito, con armas más poderosas y sofisticadas y todo, sí, es una invasión y destruyendo la cultura nuestra, la cultura de aquí porque no se respetó nada (...) y después de 500 años la gente sigue sufriendo eso (...). Son 500 años de aplastamiento."

[65] Sotomayor (2009), a researcher who supported the insurgence movement, speaks of providing a different version of the true history (p. 1) and Escribá (2009) develops his accounts from a military perspective and claims it to be impartial and objective (p. 9).

In order to have a better understanding of the causes of the violence, the commission included an overview of the historic events, beginning with the country's independence in 1821 (CEH, chapt. I, sect. 2). Ultimately the report came to very similar conclusions as the previous truth commission (*Recuperación de la Memoria Historica*, REMHI) set up by the Guatemalan Catholic Church (Tomuschat, 2001, p. 256). Although the final report has been criticised widely by the government (ibid., p. 255), this criticism was not unexpected, as the government's security forces in conjunction with the Civil Self-Defence Patrol (*Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil, PAC*) were responsible for the vast majority of human rights violations (Bornschein, 2009, p. 60). Bornschein (ibid.) summarises the findings of the CEH: "Around 200,000 men, women and children fell victim to the 34 year long conflict which lasted from the guerrillas' first appearance in 1962 until the official peace accord on December 29, 1996."[66] The guerrillas were responsible for 3 percent of the human rights violations (ibid.) thus, being responsible for approximately 6,000 deaths.

Despite the government's criticism of the CEH-report and the military's refusal to take responsibility for the past, the latest events show that even high-ranking military personnel can be held accountable.[67] Tomuschat is convinced that the perpetrators, be it the military or the guerrillas, "cannot escape questions about the phenomenon of dehumanisation which held their country in its grip for decades" (ibid., p. 256).

The historical overview now focuses on the main topic of this thesis, i.e. signs of community trauma, including transgenerational transmission of trauma and trauma circles. Due to some participants' conviction that the history of violence has its origin in the time of the arrival of the Spanish, these events will be the starting point of the historical overview.

The conquest of the Central American region that began in 1522 led to many battles with the indigenous people resulting in their defeat and gruesome decimation through slavery and diseases brought by the Spanish (Booth, Wade, & Walker, 2010, p. 47). Jonas (1991b, p. 14) believes that an estimated two-thirds of the indigenous people who lived in Central America died in the period between the arrival of the Spanish and 1650. Within Central America, the

[66] "Etwa 200.000 Männer, Frauen und Kindern fielen dem Konflikt in 34 Jahren zum Opfer – zwischen dem ersten Auftreten der Guerilla im Jahre 1962 und dem offizielle Friedensschluss am 29.12.1996."
[67] On 10th May 2013 the former dictator Rios Montt was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity committed against the Ixil people by the Guatemalan Court of Justice (Ministerio Público, 2013). His request for amnesty was denied earlier during the trial (Alvarado, 2012a). This sentence, however, was overturned on 20th May 2013 by Guatemala's Constitutional Court demanding a partial retrial (Pérez Aguilera, Molina Barreto, Porras Escobar, Maldonado Aguirre, & Chacón Corrado, 2013).

territory of today's Guatemala was in some respects an exception. More indigenous people survived than in other parts of the region. Booth et al. (2010) assume that the "relatively more advanced society" made it more difficult for the *conquistadores* to subjugate the inhabitants (p. 48). Still, the remaining population had to supply labour for the invaders who produced gold, silver, and cattle products for export (ibid.). Jonas (1991b) describes how large areas of land were expropriated and turned into vast areas of monoculture (p. 15). Indigenous people had to move to the surroundings of these *haciendas* to provide the required workforce. For their own subsistence, the labourers were granted small lots of land, which they could cultivate during their spare time.

The violent abuse of the workers and their families was commonplace and prerequisite for this coercive system. Yet particularly the people from the Guatemalan highlands defended themselves on many occasions by uprisings and by refusing to work inhumanly hard. In addition, they kept practicing their own religious and cultural traditions.

The Spanish rulers' aim was to draw as much riches as possible from the colonies, while neglecting the sustainable development of these territories (ibid., p. 14). Booth et al. remark that with the arrival of the Spaniards "the culture and process of dependant underdevelopment had begun" (2010, p. 48). By the time of independence, Guatemala was characterised by mono-export, high-concentration of wealth within a small part of the population on one side and extreme poverty on the other. The country was characterised by a "lack of infrastructure, an impoverished state, a polarized class structure, and systematic oppression of the indigenous population" (Jonas, 1991b, p. 16).

The system of social disparities continued after the independence of Guatemala in 1821. The ruling European and *criollo*[68] elite had huge social and economic advantages that held the rest of the population at subsistence level (ibid., p. 50). Independence was consequently not the quest for freedom for all inhabitants but the elite's striving for an increase in economic and political power.

The military played a central role in economic and political life in the newly independent country and triggered widespread political violence (ibid., p. 51). During the late 19th century, several liberal dictators took measures to support the country's development, yet only for the benefit of

[68] *Criollos* are the descendants of the Spanish born in Latin-America.

the few. The government encouraged the cultivation of coffee, concentrated in the hands of a few large landowners. Coffee production demanded far larger areas of land for cultivation than the previously cultivated crops and it required far more labour and the expansion of the infrastructure (Jonas, 1991b, p. 17). Consequently, villages had to provide the labour force. They were obliged to work at the nearest *finca*[69] for 2-4 weeks a year (Whitman, 2008, p. 113).

The reforms that stimulated the development of a coffee-economy had far-reaching consequences. Vast parts of land owned by the Catholic Church and indigenous communities were expropriated. Jonas (1991b) remarks that entire communities of indigenous people who previously had been able to subsist by cultivating their small parts of land were destroyed (p. 18).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the US-based United Fruit Company became one of the most influential powers in Guatemala and other Central American countries. Owning large parts of the country's railroad and telecommunication systems, it had decisive influence over the development of the country (Whitman, 2008, p. 113). Although the company claimed to build schools and hospitals and to pay higher wages than average, its political and economic influence led to the characterisation of Guatemala as a "banana republic", corrupt and dysfunctional (ibid.).

This development reached its culmination with the dictatorship of General Jorge Ubico (1931-1944). The control of infrastructure was in the hands of foreign companies and prices for exported goods were almost dictated by US-American traders (Jonas, 1991b, p. 21). The demand for cheap labour increased, prompting Ubico to draft a vagrancy law in 1934 "that commanded landless peasants to work 150 days a year on the *fincas*" (Whitman, 2008, p. 113). In addition, repressive measures were taken against labour activists and opposition groups (Jonas, 1991b, p. 21). Poverty and the exclusion of the indigenous people as well as the inequality of the country's distribution of wealth were extremely high. Up to 40 % of the most arable land belonged to only 0.15 percent of the population (Bornschein, p. 42; CEH, 1999, chap. I, sect. 8).

In 1944 a rising middle class became frustrated by the lack of political liberties and economic opportunities (Jonas, 1991b, p. 23) and began to oppose the rule by feudal landowners,

[69] *Finca* is the Spanish term for a farm.

supporting Ubico's overthrow (Whitman, 2008, p. 114). The period of the first democracy in Guatemala began under President Juan José Arévalo. During the following decade a process of diversification started and land and property issues were put on the agenda. Arévalo's successor Arbénz introduced the far reaching Agrarian Reform Law, expropriating idle lands which would then be given to peasants – either with ownership of the land or lifelong use (Jonas, 1991b, p. 27). Yet the Agrarian Reform Law produced many cases of abuse namely unlawful occupations of land by peasants (Poitevin, 2004, p. 15). Moreover, the law was bitterly opposed by the US-American United Fruit Company that was about to lose almost 90 percent of its land. The political support from the US-government intervening in favour of the United Fruit Company led to serious tensions between Guatemala and the United States. Guatemala was stigmatised as a country ruled by communists. The United States finally supported a *coup d'état* in 1954, led and assisted by parts of the Guatemalan army and the neighbouring countries Nicaragua and Honduras (Jonas, 1991b, pp. 29-30). This was the end of the democratic *intermezzo*. During the following years, numerous conflicts within the army arose. Parts of the military had favoured President Arbénz and were dissatisfied with the widespread corruption in the army (Bornschein, 2009, p. 47). In 1960, up to a third of the troops revolted unsuccessfully. As a consequence, the leaders of the revolt formed the first guerrilla group (ibid.).

The following decades were characterised by a political, economic and social system that rested on overt terror (Kantowitz & Çelik, 2009, p. 181). The separation between government and military became nonexistent. On the other side, several armed insurgent paramilitary movements were founded leading ultimately to one primary insurgent paramilitary organisation (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca,* URNG) (ibid., p. 182). Kantowitz believes that "the consolidation of Marxist, radical nationalist, and liberation theology ideologies led to the rise of a number of other important actors and organizations run, and primarily, although not exclusively, represented, by indigenous populations" (ibid.). These social movements posed a threat to the ruling class (ibid.). Of substantial importance was the role of the Catholic Church. Mainly through its organisation *Acción Católica* catechists were trained and sent all over the country to provide spiritual assistance, to help reduce poverty and oppression, and to denounce military violence against the population (CEH, 1999, chap. I, sect. 199-207).

From the beginning of the early sixties until the end of the armed conflict in 1996, the military tried to eliminate the guerrillas and every opposition movement. Although with varying intensity

over the course of time, the army fought with brutal force. Death squads were set up and entire villages were bombed and annihilated (Bornschein, 2009, p. 48; CEH, 1999, chap. II, vol. 1, sect. 64; Kantowitz & Çelik, 2009, p. 182) Methods of controlling the population were implemented involving persecution and capturing of opponents, torturing, and carrying out extra judicial executions (CEH, 1999, chap. I, sect. 213-214).

The armed insurgent groups on their part killed military personnel and people who collaborated with the army, ambushed military convoys (ibid., chap. II, vol. 1, sections 783, 786, 802), and began kidnapping to improve their financial situation (ibid., chap. II, vol. 1, sect. 804).

After a transient defeat of the insurgent organisations in the late 1960s, new guerrilla groups arose – better trained and equipped and with improved political and military structures. Nevertheless, guerrilla activity remained low during most of the 1970s.

At the same time, the army improved its organisation and equipment (ibid., chap. I, sect. 230). State terrorism and repression of the social movement remained high even after the temporary defeat of the guerrillas. The judicial system did not prosecute those who had committed atrocities and the judiciary remained under the control of the executive power, i.e. the military command (ibid., chap. I, sect. 234). A severe incident occurred in 1978 when the army killed 53 and wounded 47 during a peasants' demonstration demanding land and an end to the arbitrary actions carried out by local *finqueros*, local authorities and the military (ibid., chap. I, sect. 266). The situation of the peasants was dire. Hundreds of thousands of people from the indigenous communities had to work under inhumane conditions at the ever-expanding *fincas* (ibid., chap. I, sect. 269). Yet every attempt to fight for improvement by forming organisations in order to give more impact to their demands, was violently suppressed by the Guatemalan government (ibid., chap. I, sect. 272). More than 150 leaders from cooperatives where killed in the years 1976 and 77 (ibid., chap. I, sect. 284).

Life conditions became increasingly difficult for large parts of the – predominantly – rural population. Following the devastating earthquake in 1976, considerable parts of the rural population migrated into the capital, fleeing from poverty and rural violence. The government suppressed most social movements, which could have helped protect the population's rights. Even the Catholic Church was no safe place anymore for the traditionally Roman Catholic Guatemalans. The armed forces responded with violent persecution to the Catholic Church's

effort to support the suffering population. In part, this permitted the rise of numerous protestant churches. Many of these congregations had their roots in the United States. Missionaries from North America came in the aftermath of the earthquake to assist in the reconstruction of the country, providing medical assistance, building schools and houses, and providing spiritual care (ibid., chap. I, sect. 279). Yet most of the newly founded churches (mainly Pentecostal and fundamentalist) refrained from addressing the problems of structural poverty, injustice, human rights violations and violent oppression emphasising primarily the individual's salvation making them less likely to be targeted by state-led persecution (ibid., chap. I, sect. 280).

Despite the many forms of oppression, the indigenous community became more active, starting political initiatives. The numbers of mayors with Mayan origin increased (ibid., chap. I, sect. 313). Yet as soon as a mayor opted for reforms, the military responded harshly (ibid., chap. I, sect. 314). The insurgent armed forces tried successfully to gain the support of the Mayan population. The Guatemalan government responded in 1981 by regarding the Mayan population as a whole as a legitimate aim for military action, committing disproportionate actions against indigenous communities (ibid., chap. I, sect. 344).

During the period between 1979 and 1985, the violence reached unprecedented levels. The generals Lucas García and Rios Montt concentrated their efforts during their respective presidencies on annihilating the insurgent groups and fighting systematically against social movements and the indigenous population. Rios Montt showed particular cruelty with his "scorched earth policy" (ibid., chap. I, sect. 359). An integral part of this policy was the creation of the *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* (Civilian Self-Defence Patrols, PAC). The Guatemalan armed forces ordered that all males had to join the patrols and forced many to commit atrocities against alleged insurgent groups or collaborators who frequently happened to be neighbours, friends or even relatives. This system of total control destroyed the traditional system of indigenous authority and solidarity (ibid., chap. II, vol. 1, sect. 497). Many massacres were committed in conjunction with the PAC. Soldiers were systematically brutalised and dehumanised in order to be ready to kill.[70] A particularly violent example was the massacre in

[70] Elisabeth Rohr (2009) recounts the experiences of a soldier in the reserve army, who "had been ordered to participate in training for soldiers in the reserve army. The young men were asked to bring along a lot of food and their dogs. After a long walk through the woods, the soldiers finally arrived at a clearing where they were to stay for the night. They were told to empty their rucksacks, and put all the food in the middle of a circle. They had barely finished, when one of the officers lit a fire, and threw all of the food into the flames. The soldiers were aghast, not knowing what to do. Noticing their anxiety, the officer explained that this was part of the training, and that they now had to learn how to survive in the mountains without food in order to be able to fight against the guerrillas. Then he explained that they did not need to worry because they still had their dogs, which they could kill, roast, and eat. The soldiers stared at the officer in

the municipality of Rabinal/Baja Verapaz. The indigenous group of the Maya-Achí were believed to be willing to cooperate with the insurgent groups. In a period of 3 years (1980-1983) 3,673 people were killed (ibid., chap. II, vol. 3, sect. 1082; EAFG, 1997). In its final report, the Commission for Historical Clarification classified President Lucas Garcia's and Rios Montt's counterinsurgent activities as acts of genocide (ibid., chapt II, vol. 3, sect. 1075). Numerous other massacres were carried out in the departments of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Petén, and Baja Verapaz, with up to 376 deaths in a single incident (Finca San Francisco, Nentón, Huehuetenango) (Falla, 2011, p. 12).

During the presidency of Rios Montt, parts of the newly founded protestant churches backed the counterinsurgent policy and permitted the military to recruit young church members during youth group sessions, as one participant of the case study recollects:

> "[The church] allowed the military to enter my church in order to recruit young students. Not by force, but with generous offers for the young people. I remember that in my church we lost our youth leader" (C5, 2012)[71].

Rios Montt himself being member of a Pentecostal church favoured Protestants. Some Pastors of Pentecostal and fundamentalist protestant groups were active PAC members or PAC leaders, giving in some cases names of suspects to the military even from within their own congregation (CEH, chapt I, sect. 404). In some instances, the local authorities issued identification cards naming the respective church membership. The *evangélicos*[72] could move more freely whereas members of the Catholic Church were much more in danger (ibid., chapt I, sect. 406). Yet to complete the picture, the CEH remarks that many Pentecostal or fundamentalist groups, not to mention the historical protestant churches, opposed the violent actions of the armed forces and many became victims of the violence itself. Many pastors and members of these churches were persecuted, tortured, and killed (ibid., chapt I, sect. 421). However, this shows how disrupted and deeply fractured Guatemalan society had become.

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disbelief, and some of them started to weep, but their despair was met with contempt and laughter. When a few soldiers finally began to kill, roast, and eat their dogs, the others could not bear the sight, or the smell of burning dog meat, and ran into the woods to vomit, and hide their shame, disgust, and tears. The brother of the driver tried to resist his hunger a few days, but when he could live no longer on roots and berries, he surrendered as well. 'This was the way they brutalized and dehumanized a whole generation of young men,' summarised the driver. 'They turned them into animals before they were sent out to kill in the war.'" (p. 108)

[71] "[La iglesia] permitió que los militares entraran a mi iglesia y reclutaran jóvenes estudiantes. No de una forma forzosa, pero sí con buenas ofertas de comodidad para los jóvenes. Recuerdo que en mi iglesia perdimos al presidente de jóvenes."

[72] The term *evangélicos* is used for various protestant denominations.

In 1983 the army general Mejía Víctores came to power after yet another *coup d'état*. Rios Montt had lost his support within the leading classes and the military. In addition, the influence of Rios Montt's church "*Iglesia del Verbo"* was not approved of by many of the ruling class (ibid., chapt I, sect. 436).

An important new development was the creation of a new constitution. For the first time in Guatemalan history, respect for and protection of human rights became an important factor (ibid., chapt I, sect. 454). Simultaneously, the armed forces was believed to have almost won the war against the insurgent groups (ibid., chapt I, sect. 447). However, the international community pressed the Guatemalan government to seek political solutions to the conflict (ibid., chapt I, sect. 464). During the following decade, difficult peace talks were conducted, interrupted continuously by acts of violence, yet leading finally to the peace accords of 1996 (ibid., chapt I, sect. 466)[73]. Significant steps towards these agreements were the Oslo accords in 1994, signed between the guerrillas and the government. These accords laid the foundations for continuing talks, and allowed matters to proceed in small steps. The Oslo accords permitted large numbers of refugees at the Mexican border to resettle in Guatemala. They also gave way to the instalment of the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* (CEH) – the Commission for Historical Clarification of human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict (ibid., chapt I, sect. 517).

However, the CEH had been given a weak mandate and was constrained to investigating only for a short period of time (6 -12 months) (Oettler, 2004, pp. 107-108). Therefore, the Catholic Church decided to support the CEH with its own investigations conducting a study called *Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (Recovery of Historical Memory, REMHI). Over time REMHI evolved to a project of its own, emphasising strongly the communicative process by giving voice to the victims through extensive interviewing (ibid.). In the end, CEH benefited greatly from REMHI, not only by using their leaders' expertise but also by employing experienced REMHI staff (ibid., p. 142).

The CEH's final report concluded that the 36-year long internal armed conflict resulted in more than 200,000 dead and enforced disappeared, at least 669 massacres, mostly committed against the Mayans (Duque, 2005, p. 2), and between 500,000 and 1.5 million refugees (CEH,

[73] The peace accords contain twelve different accords dealing with the transition to a post war society. Among others the accords contain regulations concerning human rights – in particular for the indigenous people, constitutional reforms and the establishment of the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) (SEPAZ, 2012).

chapt III, sect. 298). In order to promote peace and unity in Guatemala, the CEH gave recommendations on how to deal with the wounds of the past. The recommendations included measures to preserve the memory, reparations, and promotion of human rights and democracy (CEH, 2004).

Unfortunately, the Guatemalan government did not agree with the Commission's conclusions. During Alvaro Arzú's (1996-2000) presidency numerous follow-up commissions were appointed to help implement the CEH's recommendations, but, as Reilly (2009) remarks, "most proved ineffective due to overlapping mandates and little clout to enforce compliance" (p. 27). Although Arzú's successor, President Portillo (2000-2004), promised change and the implementation of the recommendations given by the CEH, no substantial actions followed (Oettler, 2004, p. 308). Organisations that promoted human rights, justice and the uncovering of truth faced death-threats, assaults and abductions while the investigatory bodies remained largely inactive and thus provided impunity for perpetrators (ibid., pp. 313-314). In addition, any attempt to bring the perpetrators to justice was restrained by the Law of National Reconciliation (*Ley de Reconciliación Nacional*) (El Congreso de la República de Guatemala, 1996), which had been passed just days before the signing of the peace accords, exempting members of the guerrilla and armed forces from prosecution for war crimes that had been classified as political (Reilly, 2009, p. 28). Human Rights promoters regard this law as the key to explaining the prevalence of impunity, even though it excludes torture, enforced disappearances, and genocide from the amnesty (cf. El Congreso de la República de Guatemala, 1996, art. 8; Oettler, 2004, p. 98). Impunity gained further importance when President Arzú's administration prematurely urged the victims to forgive the offender even before they had been identified and named (Oettler, 2004, p. 222; Reilly, p. 27).

Impunity became a pattern of behaviour and thus encouraged everyday crime. Corruption became a serious issue involving politicians and the police forces. Narcotics trafficking, mass prison escapes, and a high murder rate plagued the country (Reilly, 2009, p. 29). A prominent victim of the ongoing violence was Bishop Juan Gerardi, who was murdered in 1998 just two days after presenting the REMHI study.[74] To this day the murder rate in Guatemala remains one

[74] The Bishop Gerardi murder was one of the few cases were the attempt was made to prosecute military officers after the war (Reilly, 2009, p. 30). Another prominent case was the murder of Myrna Mack, an anthropologist who had been investigating the situation of the Guatemalan refugees (ibid., p. 30). Her sister, Helen Mack, founder and head of the Myrna Mack Foundation, is an internationally renowned and highly respected advocate against impunity. She

of the highest in the world (41 per 100,000 population in 2010) (UNODC, 2012). Lack of punishment often occurs, particularly for those who master-minded the crimes (Myrna Mack Foundation, 2012, p. 25). Reilly (2009) remarks that much of today's violence stems from "increasing poverty, from lack of formal employment, from decreased opportunity even in the 'informal economy', from an overabundance of weapons and excess numbers of people whose sole skill lies in using them" (p. 38). However, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (*Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala*, CICIG) sees considerable progress in the prosecution of high-impact cases (CICIG, 2011, p. 27).

This brief overview of Guatemala's history shows why the use of coercion and force to solve problems is so widespread. As a result, high levels of violence in all areas of society including high rates of domestic violence plague the country (Lagarde, 2011). A participant in the case study states: "Here in this country the war and the violence that we are currently suffering leaves many enemies and many people who believe – still today – that the only way to face the enemy is by punishing him hard, destroying him, eliminating him if possible" [75] (C2, 2012).

Another participant concludes: "In Guatemala the State taught to kill, the State taught to injure, the State taught to deny the other and to pass over the other's rights, this was the huge lecture given by the state" [76] (NC1, 2012).

Even Christian congregations occasionally show this pattern of dealing with conflict. C7 (2012) recalls a situation in a church: "I know a congregation (...) they lived through a process of death threats from within the congregation during the last year. (...) So, these same patrons of the war (...) – the same way they managed the conflicts in the past. The people have remained marked by this. So, they don't know how to handle, they haven't developed other mechanisms that would permit them to work out the conflicts in a different way"[77].

The following section analyses some consequences of Guatemala's violent history by evaluating the data from the case study that was conducted by the author in the year 2012. The

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campaigned intensely for the prosecution of her sister's murderers which ultimately lead to their final conviction (Mack, 2010).

[75] "Acá en este país la guerra y la violencia que ahora estamos sufriendo deja muchos enemigos y muchas personas, inclusive ahora, creen que la única manera de enfrentar al enemigo es castigándolo duramente, es destruyéndolo, eliminándolo si es posible".

[76] "En Guatemala el Estado enseñó a matar, el Estado enseñó a herir, el Estado enseñó a negar al otro y a pasar por encima del derecho del otro, esa fue la gran enseñanza del Estado".

[77] "Yo conozco la congregación (...), han vivido un proceso este último año de amenazas de muerte dentro de la misma congregación. (...) Entonces estos mismos patrones de la guerra ¿no? como se manejaban los conflictos en el pasado. La gente se ha quedado marcada con eso. Entonces no saben cómo manejar, no han desarrollado otros mecanismos que les permitan trabajar los conflictos de otro modo".

evaluation will be structured by the three guiding questions mentioned above with the following main topics: signs of trauma; efforts to break the cycle of trauma; reconciliation.

4.4 Trauma, recovery and reconciliation: what Guatemalan experts say

4.4.1 Signs of trauma (guiding question 1)

Discussing the signs of trauma in Guatemalan society, NC4 (2012) emphasises that the concept of traumatised communities as such should not detract from the fact that the causes of the trauma are "abnormal contexts". NC4 states: "The people are not traumatised by themselves. On the contrary, what is abnormal is that the situation provokes their trauma; the society is not the one who is sick."[78] Many interviewees agree about the fact – as noted above – that the larger history of Guatemala has to be taken into account when analysing the current situation and that Guatemalan society has been strongly influenced by its history.

Yet history is disputed. The first dispute arises over the early history of Guatemala: did the indigenous people live in a decadent society with an already collapsed political system – even before the Spanish arrived? This view, taken by many non-indigenous people in Guatemala sees the invaders as some sort of rescuers that freed the indigenous people from dire underdevelopment by introducing their advanced European culture. In this way, however, the Spanish conquerors justified any action that promoted the implementation of their own culture and the destruction of the existing culture. This sowed the seeds for a century long racist attitude in Central America and a dehumanisation of the original population. Indigenous people however, want to be proud of their ancestors in order to gain new self-esteem. Valenzuela (2009) therefore, defends the indigenous people against the conviction of being descendants from a decadent nation that had already almost disappeared when the Spanish soldiers arrived (p. 70). Jonas (1991b) agrees and points out that the Pre-Hispanic indigenous Guatemala could by no means be called "primitive" (p. 13). This society had a complex, stratified and hierarchical structure but was "torn by multiple social tensions" (ibid.).

This dispute can be interpreted as the first sign of community trauma, transmitted over the centuries. As noted above, community trauma arises when a community's fundamental social

[78] "Porque no es que las personas estén traumatizadas por sí. Sino lo que es anormal es la situación que lo provoca que ellos estén traumatizados, para no decir que la sociedad está enferma."

values are threatened as well as its welfare and survival (Audergon, 2005, p. 281). Even today, the *conquista* appears to be the most important event for the explanation of Guatemala's history. It seems to be the chosen trauma for many Guatemalans. NC3 (2012) recounts a conversation with an old indigenous man about the internal armed conflict. The man said, "You know, these years of war, for us it was the small war."[79] NC3 asks, "Then what was the big war?" The old man answered, "The colonial era"[80].

The denigration of the indigenous ancestors reinforces the notion of being inferior to others. There have been very few events since the Spanish invasion of which indigenous people can be proud. Constant oppression made any success almost impossible. Yet the indigenous people are longing for appreciation and recognition of their value.

C11 (2012) tells with considerable pride the story of a Mayan woman who came to visit the capital. People from the city frequently call indigenous women by the name "María". C11 recounts:

> "Once a woman, someone from Cobán was walking on the streets of the capital city and a woman came out of her house calling her: 'Maria, Maria. Don't you want work? I've got work for you'. The woman turned, the young lady turned and said, 'Thank you very much for offering work, madam, but I can't.' And she took her car keys, opened and got into her car and she is a doctor."[81]

The following section analyses several factors that could indicate community trauma such as: the failure to provide safety, justice, and basic needs for living, the loss of agency and meaning, the prevalence of shame, humiliation and fear, the rupture of social tissue, chosen trauma and transgenerational transmission, fantasies of revenge, destructive narratives and identity formation (see also chapter 3).

4.4.1.1 Unmet basic needs for living, safety and justice

One cannot visit Guatemala without noticing the poverty. Not only in the countryside but even in the capital. NC1 (2012) explains:

[79] "Sabe qué pasa es que esos años de la guerra para nosotros fue la pequeña guerra."
[80] "¿Y cuál fue la gran guerra?" (...) "La época colonial".
[81] "Entonces una vez pasó una señora, una de Cobán pasó en la calle en la ciudad capital y salió una señora de su casa y le dice: '¡María, María!, ¿no quiere trabajo?, yo tengo trabajo.' Y la mujer volteó, la señorita volteó y dijo: 'Muchas gracias señora por mi trabajo, pero no puedo.' Y a tiempo salió con su carro, sacó la llave de su carro, abrió y entró en su carro y es doctora."

> "In fact, entire villages were moved to the periphery of the [capital] city (...). So, that's why we have a high proportion of people living in the peripheral zones of the city centre that have a very high level of poverty. (...) The people live in situations of extreme poverty with very little access to formal employment, with very little access to basic services like drinking water, electricity."[82]

This poverty caused many to get involved in criminal activities to provide for their daily needs (C2, 2012). Cases of domestic violence surged. As a consequence numerous young people left their homes looking for a family substitute within youth gangs despite their cruel rules (C1, 2012). Even today there are forms of slavery in the country which means a complete loss of agency for the affected (ibid.). These people "live in a situation of neglect" (ibid.)[83]. In many parts of the city people live in constant danger of being shot. The right to live in peace is constantly threatened (NC9, 2012).

The populations who live outside the cities face a similar situation. Lack of fertile land – which is owned primarily by rich major landowners (C11, 2012) – causes many families to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. NC11 (2012) remarks: "What kind of hope can you give, when their life hasn't changed between the 18th century and the 21st century? (...) You don't have telephone, you don't have light, you don't have water, you don't have access to health services, you don't have access to anything and you are in misery"[84].

C4 (2012) complains that particularly the indigenous population is being marginalised to this day. A demonstration of this may be the slow progress in implementing The Accord about Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People (*El Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*), part of the peace accords from 1996. The 2011 report from the *Secretaría de la Paz*, located at the Office of the President of Guatemala mentions this accord as the one that lags behind most of all (SEPAZ, 2011, p. 6). NC5 (2012) concludes: "This is a country where justice has never been done. Here, 98 % of the cases remain unpunished, of the daily

[82] "De hecho pueblos enteros fueron trasladados a la periferia de la ciudad (...). Entonces de esa cuenta tenemos una gran cantidad de población en las zonas periféricas al centro de la ciudad que tienen un altísimo nivel de pobreza. (...) La gente vive en condiciones de extrema pobreza, con muy poco acceso a empleo formal, con muy poco acceso a servicios básicos como agua potable, electricidad."
[83] "(...) viven en una condición de abandono"
[84] "(...) qué esperanza tú le podés dar si su vida no ha cambiado nada en el siglo XVIII a siglo XXI (...). No tenés teléfono, no tenés luz, no tenés agua no tenés acceso a salud no tenés acceso a nada y estás en la miseria".

cases"[85]. C1 (2012) adds, "Let's say, the justice system in Guatemala – the problem it has is that the one who pays more money is the one who wins the case"[86].

Lack of justice is one of the major obstacles for dealing with the past. C2 (2012) notes that many people lost relatives during the war and that "none of those who were responsible for this harm have ever been taken (...) to trial"[87, 88].

These difficult life conditions and the lack of justice led to a loss of agency in large parts of the population. Many leaders from the villages or social movements had been killed thus leaving only a few who could lead and advance social and political change (NC12, 2012). C16 (2012) observes that "the University of San Carlos generated a considerable amount of leadership, quite a considerable amount of leadership during the years of the war, but what happened, all this generation of leaders disappeared, were killed; Guatemala stayed practically without young leadership"[89].

The marginalisation of large parts of the population, the lack of justice, and the loss of agency protract the conflict between the different groups in the country and lead to extremely difficult living conditions. These factors instigate violence (Staub, 2007, p. 339) and at the same time violence reinforces them (NC9, 2012). Several interviewees perceive a severe fragmentation in Guatemalan society, between *ladinos*[90] and indigenous, urban and rural areas, rich and poor. They conclude that the social fabric of Guatemala has been damaged (C2, 2012; NC1, 2012; NC4, 2012).

4.4.1.2 Loss of meaning

The violence carried out by the country's security forces during most of Guatemala's history served to legitimise the use of violence in general as a means of solving personal problems. Subsequently, as NC8 (2012) remarks, ethical values were distorted and "anti-values"[91] passed

[85] "Es en un país donde nunca se ha hecho justicia. Aquí el 98% de los casos quedan impunes, de los casos cotidianos."
[86] "Digamos, la justicia en Guatemala – el problema que tiene es que el que paga más dinero es el que gana el juicio."
[87] "Los responsables de esos daños nunca fueron llevados (...) a un juicio."
[88] Apart from several trials against former leaders like former dictator and president Rios Montt and other high rank military personnel, new trials were set up lately to convict perpetrators of medium and lower military rank on cases of abuse, torture, slavery, and murder (Alvarado, 2012b).
[89] "La universidad de san Carlos generó mucho liderazgo, bastante liderazgo durante los años de la guerra. ¿Pero qué fue lo que pasó? Toda esa generación de líderes fueron desaparecidos, fueron muertos, prácticamente Guatemala se quedó sin liderazgo joven".
[90] The term *ladino* is generally used in Guatemala to describe descendants of a mixed Spanish and indigenous heritage (Bornschein, 2009, p. 41) being thus a synonym of *mestizo*. However, the term *ladino* can also be used in more general terms to describe persons who are not Spanish nor indigenous, but include all sorts of mixed ethnicity (Soto-Quiros, 2006).
[91] "anti-valores"

on to the next generations. Formerly valued goals that were worth living for, like caring for the family and the community, were lost. Instead, cruelty, lack of solidarity, exclusion and high levels of physical aggression dominate[92] (ibid.). C4 (2012) observes that many victims of the war have lost the continuity of their lives after having lost loved ones and not being able to bury them according to their rites. People find it difficult to establish meaningful relationships in an environment of ongoing fear. For many their lives lost all meaning, particularly those who had to endure the loss of their children. There were times during the internal armed conflict, when the military came into villages that supported the guerrillas and took their children away. NC7 (2012) tells: during their first operations, "they killed the children and then [after subsequent raids] they started to sell them"[93]. C8 (2012) emphasises how hard and costly it is to find new meaning or even to continue with life after having lived through such difficult circumstances. The "fragmentation of the fabric of society"[94] perceived by NC9 (2012) leads to a gradual process of individuals disconnecting from their social environment and ultimately committing social suicide. NC9 states that this process progresses in steps

> "from the stage of community life to the stage of sealing themselves off from the community; from the sealing off from the community to the stage of making themselves invisible, that is, you are sealed off but you exist and then you start making yourself invisible and you finish with the suicide of your identity, you are nobody, you don't exist"[95] (ibid.).

Thus, people mistrust each other, even those in the vicinity, leading to a society that grows lonely and one where people find no meaning in their lives.

4.4.1.3 Physical and psychological symptoms

Some victims of the internal armed conflict still show physical and psychological signs of trauma. Though many symptoms have ceased, some still cry when they remember their lost land or their murdered family members (NC1, 2012). C15 (2012) observed that some of those who had to flee from the rural areas into the cities never fully recovered. C15 remarks: "they are

[92] NC8 (2012) tells of women that have been found with gruesomely mutilated bodies: "There have appeared dismembered women, without head, without arms, without legs, with their vaginal lips cut off" ("Han aparecido mujeres desmembradas sin cabeza, sin brazos, sin piernas, con sus labios vaginales cercenados.")
[93] "Al inicio mataron a los niños y después los empezaron a vender".
[94] "fragmentación de la estructura del tejido comunitario"
[95] "desde la etapa de vida comunitaria a la etapa del encierro dentro de la comunidad. Del encierro en la comunidad a la etapa de la invisibilización, o sea estás encerrado pero existes y luego empiezas a invisibilizarte y cierras con el suicidio de identidad, no eres nadie, no existes. "

farmers, they spent their entire life on the fields and they lived from their land; coming to the city, not knowing how to do anything, that is surely a change!"[96] (ibid.).

NC8 (2012) explains that indigenous people recognise an illness called "the fright"[97] that describes the symptoms of PTSD such as experiencing intense fear. Fear is widespread even among young people, although its origin is often not explicable to them. Some complain about headaches as a way to express their traumatic suffering (C11, 2012).

A consequence of these persisting symptoms of trauma is that the society seems to re-enact the traumatic events, for example, when individuals turn against themselves or against others. C16 (2012) thinks that "society re-enacts most of the cases in a negative form, either towards the inner person, which causes drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic violence, or re-enacts towards the outside which causes crime, robbery, assaults, the Maras[98»99].

4.4.1.4 Fear, humiliation, and shame

It is no wonder, argues NC3 (2012), that the Guatemalans have become introvert after having to live for centuries within a violent setting. As a result, they rarely fight for their rights, out of fear of persecution. C13 (2012) comments that a Guatemalan usually "does not express himself, he doesn't participate anymore."[100] People are afraid of being outspoken about their opinions. C16 (2012) remarks: "There is still fear of saying: I am going to do that, or let's do something, or let's protest"[101]. NC11 (2012) speaks of a form of self-censorship: "There is a fear (...) which these new generations cannot explain but there is fear, there is self-censorship, there is much frustration and much mistrust and the fact that you cannot be direct in order to talk"[102]. C4 (2012) perceives high levels of mistrust in the neighbourhood as during the internal armed conflict it was quite common for neighbours to accuse each other.

There is intense fear amongst the indigenous community of assisting in trials of military leaders who had committed mass atrocities. They are scared that someday these people will take revenge. This deep mistrust of the judicial and political system stems from numerous

[96] "son campesinos, toda su vida vivieron en el campo y vivieron de la tierra, venir a la ciudad, no saber hacer nada, eso ya es un cambio"
[97] "el susto"
[98] Mara = criminal youth gang
[99] "La sociedad re-actúa en forma negativa la mayoría de veces, tanto hacia dentro de la persona lo que causa drogadicción, alcoholismo, violencia intrafamiliar o re-actúa hacia fuera, lo que causa la delincuencia, los robos, los asaltos, las maras".
[100] "ya no se expresa, ya no participa"
[101] "todavía hay miedo de decir: yo voy hacer esto, o hagamos algo, o protestemos."
[102] "[Hay] un miedo que (...) tal vez estas generaciones nuevas no lo pueden explicar pero que hay un miedo, hay una autocensura, hay mucha frustración y mucha desconfianza y el hecho de que no se pueda ser directo para poder hablar."

experiences of high levels of corruption and of impunity (NC4, 2012). People prefer silence (C11, 2012; NC12, 2012).

In the 2003 elections, General Ríos Montt won the largest number of municipalities in the department of Quiché – in spite of this part of the country being most affected by Ríos Montt's atrocities. NC9 (2012) explains: "Many people said that they had voted for him because they were afraid of him coming back and if daddy Ríos Montt finds out that I didn't vote for him he is going to come and kill me"[103, 104]. When in 2012 Otto Perez Molina, an ex-military, was elected for president, many were scared that the armed conflict might start again (C5, 2012).

Fear is a constant companion in the everyday life of many Guatemalans. NC10 (2012) recounts: "We are scared to go out on the streets, we are scared to take the bus, we are scared when our neighbourhood has no policeman at the entrance, when there is no security guard in the Bank with a gun, when there is no policeman in the bus with a gun, a security guard with a firearm. So, we militarise all the spaces"[105].

Consequently, people are inclined to make fear based choices. C9 (2012) comments: "Fear comes in as a strong factor when making decisions in the everyday life"[106]. C9 observes people saying, "Well, I don't go out at night, I don't send my son to study at a certain place because it is too dangerous"[107].

This fear, however, is rarely recognised as such. Even many churches emphasise mostly how victorious and strong a Christian should be. Few churches give liturgical spaces in which the fear could be processed (C9, 2012).

In addition to the high prevalence of fear, humiliating attitudes and structures persist that lead to a deep sense of shame in the victims and this affects entire families.

[103] "Mucha de la gente decía que había votado por él porque tenía miedo que él regresara y si el tata Ríos Montt se da cuenta de que yo no voté por él me va a venir a matar."
[104] The *Fundación Centroamericana de Desarrollo* (FUNCEDE) (2004) reports that in the department Quiché Ríos Montt's party won the 2003 elections in 71 % of the municipalities (p. 2).
[105] "nos da miedo salir a la calle, nos da miedo tomar un bus, nos da miedo que nuestra colonia no tenga un policía en la entrada, que en el banco no haya un guardia de seguridad con un arma, que en la camioneta no haya policía con un arma, un guardia de seguridad con un arma. Entonces militarizamos todos los espacios."
[106] "el miedo entra como un factor muy fuerte en la toma de decisiones en la vida cotidiana."
[107] "Bueno, no salgo de noche, no voy a enviar a mi hijo a estudiar en tal lugar porque es demasiado peligroso."

Indigenous people are frequently treated as if they did not exist. NC1 (2012) tells: “I remember a person from the middle class who once, being in the house, said that there was no one at home – and there was the housemaid working”[108].

This humiliating behaviour adds to the gruesome memories many indigenous people have about the time of the internal armed conflict. NC2 (2012) observed that when a family member disappeared during the internal armed conflict, the surrounding community was convinced that it was somehow the victim’s fault. The grieving family then had to endure communal humiliation in addition to their grief of having lost a loved one.

In other cases, perpetrators of atrocities live in the same village or neighbourhood as their victims. NC2 (2012) tells of a case, where the former tormentor is in charge of distributing water. When the victims need water, they have to go through the humiliating situation of asking the killer of a family member for water.

Raped women are being marginalised and called “prostitutes”[109] or “wives of soldiers”[110] (NC4, 2012). Their husbands also feel deeply ashamed and guilty for not having been able to protect their wives (ibid.). NC4 comments: “The shame of the community fell on them”[111] (ibid.).

4.4.1.5 Conspiracy of silence

The most common reaction to these traumatic experiences in a community or family is keeping silent. Rape had been a major tool of warfare, to humiliate the enemy. Yet until the present day this topic has been sealed under silence by most of the victims, even though rape is still a major problem in Guatemala (C1, 2012). Just as Holocaust survivors experienced a “conspiracy of silence”, Guatemalan victims notice the same thing happening in their country. People do not want to talk about the atrocities that happened to them during the armed conflict and certainly not about the violence they committed.

The relatives distanced themselves from the victims and their immediate family. Thus, the family of victims had to endure this additional burden. As a result, the families began to hide what had happened to them. They decided to forget the disappeared or murdered son, brother or sister, as a means of dealing with the pain. NC7 (2012) comments: “They remove the photo from the

[108] “Yo recuerdo a una persona de clase media que dijo un día en su casa que no había nadie en la casa – y allí estaba trabajando la empleada.”
[109] “prostitutas”
[110] “mujeres de soldados”
[111] “Y sobre ellas recayó (...) la vergüenza de la comunidad.”

living room. They stop mentioning him. Jorge never existed – just to give a name to the disappeared or to the dead – because the fact that he is a member of the family is a stigma on them"[112].

NC7 is convinced that the silence is hurtful and impedes recovery: "And this, I believe, damages them a lot more, the attempt to erase it from their life history (...), that is, to make him disappear not only like the army made him disappear, but to make him disappear even from the core of the family"[113] (ibid.). NC7 believes that keeping silence for so long has become a typical characteristic of the behaviour of Guatemalans (ibid.). Consequently, any attempt to break the silence encounters mistrust and even violent opposition. C10 (2012) experienced that as soon as a group starts to speak up, others get scared and try to silence this group of people.

Even many churches refrain from addressing the everyday problems and injustices of their congregation from fear of making influential enemies. C10 describes the way many churches perceive their own role in society: "The church's purpose is to save souls, to preach the gospel, to preach heaven, to preach about escaping hell, not to get involved in social topics. One must not talk about poverty. One must not talk about injustice. One must not talk about impunity. This does not befit the church"[114] (ibid.).

In addition, a widespread lack of knowledge about the causes and consequences of the internal armed conflict spurs the "conspiracy of silence" (C1, 2012) and thus plays into the hands of the perpetrators. Many Guatemalans, especially those who have hardly been affected by the war, do not want to believe the magnitude of the atrocities committed by the security forces as reported by the CEH and dismiss any accounts of genocide (C7, 2012).

4.4.1.6 Fantasies of revenge

Fantasies of revenge for what had happened during the course of history have largely ceased. Older people in particular insist on forgetting what has happened (C1, 2012). Some though, had to work hard to overcome their desire for revenge. C7 (2012) recollects: "I couldn't stand looking at Ríos Montt, I couldn't stand looking at his face, I wanted to destroy it! And I had to go through

[112] "Van a quitar la foto de la sala. Van a dejar de mencionarlo. Jorge nunca existió, por ponerle un nombre al desaparecido o al muerto porque el hecho de tenerlo en la familia implica una mancha para ellos."
[113] "Y eso yo creo que los daña mucho más, el tratar de borrarlo de la historia de la vida (...). O sea desaparecerlo no sólo como lo desapareció el ejército sino que desaparecerlo incluso del núcleo de la familia."
[114] "La iglesia está para salvar almas, para predicar el evangelio, para predicar el cielo, para predicar la huída del infierno, no para meterse a temas sociales. No hay que hablar de pobreza. No hay que hablar de injusticia. No hay que hablar de impunidad. Eso no le corresponde a la iglesia."

a long process of healing, for years in order to be able to look at him and not feeling what I felt before because I wanted to rip him off"[115].

One may ask if revenge has shifted to everyday violence. Apart from high levels of domestic violence and an extremely high rate of homicides, lynching of criminals has become very common. C11 (2012) states that frustrated by an incompetent judicial system people say "there is no justice". As a consequence "they are making their own justice and that's why there so many are lynched"[116] (ibid.). NC9 (2012) gives an example:

> "*La Terminal* ... – it is a huge market, a chaos of a market (...) So, there are assaults all the time and all that. Then, what [the vendors] did was to pay a group of criminals, CRIMINALS that they should kill those who steal inside [the market]. How do they call these kids? They are called 'guardian angels' (...). And the people accept them as such"[117].

Another example is given by C9 (2012):

> "They kill your son and three days later someone knocks at your door and says: 'I know who killed your son, if you like, I can take care of this, eliminate this person'"[118]

Currently the solution proposed by Central American governments is to increase the use of force. C2 (2012) explains that acting with a "firm hand"[119] is one of the favoured concepts to counter violence. Governments consider "imposing, using the death penalty for the perpetrators, for those who have raped and destroyed others."[120]

4.4.1.7 Chosen trauma and narratives

As mentioned before, almost all interviewees believe that the *conquista* and the internal armed conflict had by far the biggest influence on the Guatemalan society, on its behaviour and its thinking. It seems as if the narrative about the colonial rule is the "chosen trauma" (cf. Volkan, 1997), especially for the Mayan population. NC3 (2012) observes an oral tradition in the Mayan

[115] "Yo no podía ver a Ríos Montt, ¡no podía ver la cara de ese, yo quería deshacerlo! Y tuve que hacer un trabajo muy largo de sanación, de años para poder verlo y no sentir lo que sentía porque yo quería desgarrarlo."
[116] "ellos toman su propia justicia y por eso hay linchamientos".
[117] "La Terminal (...) - es un mercado enorme, un caos de mercado (...). Y entonces hay asaltos a cada rato y todo. Y entonces lo que hicieron los mismos fue pagar a un grupo de criminales, CRIMINALES, que se dedican a matar a aquellos que roban dentro. ¿Y cómo se llaman los chavos? Se llaman ángeles guardianes (...). Y la gente los reconoce así."
[118] "Te matan a tu hijo y tres días después alguien toca a la puerta y dice: 'yo sé quién mató a su hijo, si quiere yo puedo arreglar eso, eliminar a esa persona."
[119] "Mano dura"
[120] "de imponer, de utilizar la pena de muerte para los perpetradores, para los que han violado y destruido a otros."

community that transmits the horrendous stories of 300 years of colonial rule and the equally distressing events after the independence of Guatemala. NC4 (2012) is convinced that this long period of violence has shaped the Guatemalan personality: "We Guatemalans are in general retracted, shy, timid, we are introvert (...). And this is not without reason, it is the result of a centuries-long process of traumatic suffering"[121]. NC8 (2012) is convinced that the transmission of anti-values over generations "has generated violence, has generated feelings of mistrust"[122]. C6 (2012) believes that the oppression initiated by the Spanish "sowed bitterness, resentment, contempt for the Spanish"[123]. And until today "we haven't solved the problem of exploitation, it continues"[124](ibid.).

On the other hand, it is clearly visible that those who hold the political power in the country, including large parts of the military, have a different view. In their view, the main problem of the colonial time was the payment of tribute to Spain. Consequently, the heroic fight for independence from Spain terminated this kind of economic oppression. NC6 (2012) argues that the reason for the fight for independence was the wish to increase the wealth of the ruling class rather than the liberation of all Guatemalans. Still, particularly members of the military are proud of a history in which they believe they have liberated and protected the country from threats from the outside as well as from the inside.

During the era of the Cold War the military forces perceived the rise of communism as a major threat. The fight between the free world against communism became the ruling class' new narrative. Consequently, the whole internal armed conflict was, and still is regarded by some as a conflict between the communist "revolutionary project" and a legitimate "counterinsurgency" (NC1, 2012). C15 (2012) remarks that after the 1954 US-lead *coup d'êtat* missionaries from Europe and the United States were sent all over Guatemala to counteract communism. "Yet when they arrived they noticed that communism doesn't exist. There is only hunger, misery and exploitation"[125] (ibid.).

A similar situation arose after the 1976 earthquake when numerous aid workers and missionaries came to help with rebuilding the country. C6 (2012) comments that "they couldn't

[121] "los guatemaltecos en general somos retraídos, somos inhibidos, somos tímidos, somos introvertidos ... Y eso no es casual, es el resultado de un proceso de siglos de sufrimiento traumático."
[122] "ha generado violencia, ha generado sentimientos de desconfianza."
[123] "sembró la amargura, resentimiento, desprecio para los españoles."
[124] "no hemos solucionado el problema de la explotación, continúa."
[125] "Al llegar ahí se dan cuenta que el comunismo no existe. Lo que hay es hambre, miseria, hay explotación."

believe it; they realised the misery in which the indigenous people lived. They certainly got upset"[126]. The help from outside resulted in raising the indigenous people's self-confidence. As a consequence, many joined the armed struggle against Guatemala's ruling system (ibid.).

NC10 (2012) notes that the far right groups in Guatemala regard any process of truth finding as a form of revenge. They argue: "It is a lie that there has been a genocide, (...) it is revenge because the revolutionary left (...) lost to a noble army which only defended the country from falling into communism"[127].

NC6 (2012) thinks that this different perception about historic events can be seen in the naming of certain streets, projects, and bridges in the capital city after key leaders of the military. NC6 notes that the names chosen belonged "to persons who have hurt Guatemala"[128] (ibid.).

In NC1's (2012) opinion, this diametrically opposite way of interpreting history is due to a simplistic understanding of the conflict. NC1 names a wide variety of factors that were part of the conflict such as cultural and ideological dimensions including ethics, religion, and gender. NC1 argues that the lack of respect for these different dimensions resulted in the internal armed conflict. NC1 remarks: "the conflict is the most grotesque manifestation of all the conflicts that have been cultivated over centuries in Guatemalan society and this systematic lack of acceptance or recognition of the other"[129] (ibid.).

C5 (2012) therefore fears that the short period of democracy since the peace accords has not yet sufficiently changed the way of thinking in Guatemalan society in order to ensure a peaceful coexistence of the different groups in the country. C5 states: "After 500 years with a history of oppression, of pain that Guatemala had since the Spanish dominion, I believe that nothing has changed us"[130] (ibid.). NC9 (2012) thinks that this is the reason why Guatemala elected an ex-military for president in 2012: "communities which have been hijacked and repressed by a group or by individuals, end up falling in love again, falling in love with the tyrant"[131](ibid.).

[126] "no lo creían; se dieron cuenta de la miseria en que vivía el pueblo indígena. Ellos por supuesto se molestaron".
[127] "Es mentira que haya habido genocidio, que es una venganza porque la izquierda revolucionaria (...) perdió por un ejército noble que solo defendió al país de no caer en el comunismo."
[128] "de personajes que han hecho daño a Guatemala".
[129] "el conflicto [armado interno] es como la manifestación más grotesca de toda la conflictividad que se había venido cultivando durante siglos en la sociedad guatemalteca y de esa falta de aceptación o de reconocimiento del otro de manera sistemática".
[130] "Después de 500 años de historia opresiva, de dolor que Guatemala ha tenido desde el dominio español, creo que no nos cambió nada."
[131] "comunidades que han sido secuestradas y reprimidas por un grupo o por personas terminan nuevamente enamorándose, enamorándose del verdugo."

NC3 (2012) concludes that the relationship between *ladinos* and indigenous is still very complicated, full of suspicion and prejudice[132]. The respective narratives are full of oversimplified dichotomies. NC10 (2012) complains: "they divide us into the good and the bad, the capable and incapable, the communists and the businessmen, the rich and the poor"[133] (see also C16, 2012). The only common ground seems to be the mutual condemnation of the colonial era, though for different reasons.

4.4.1.8 Identity

As stated before, a "mark of collective trauma is the sense of distress, humiliation, and self-blame that accompanies a recognition that one belongs to some group" (Luhrmann, 2000, p. 184). Native Guatemalan people are in danger of being ashamed of their descent, relating submissively to the non-indigenous and having a low sense of self-esteem. NC2 (2012) observes Mayan youth in the capital commenting that

> "the vast majority of indigenous youth who live in the city don't like to identify themselves as indigenous youth. There is a rejection of their history, there is a denial of their cultural identity ..., of their cultural background, because identifying oneself with this background would mean identifying oneself with the most disadvantaged part of, let's say, with the most excluded part of society"[134].

NC6 (2012) agrees by observing that many indigenous people try to behave and look like *ladinos* rejecting their Mayan heritage. NC6 calls this "in part a colonising mind-set"[135] (ibid.).[136] Ironically, this seems like a late victory for the colonisers and their descendants who have tried for centuries to assimilate the indigenous population, where even names were changed, to eliminate the typical "x" (NC3, 2012). NC3 (ibid.) observes as a consequence that many Mayan people have a submissive and introvert character which does not easily connect with others.

[132] C11 (2012) recounts bitterly, how indigenous people are treated: "(...) in the bus: someone comes in and it is clearly visible, it is a ladino, well dressed and all, and he is looking for a place to sit. On the other hand there is an indigenous man with a large bag: 'Move into the back, back, back. There is someone coming!' – and that's how it happens in other offices in our country." ("... en una camioneta: entra uno y se mira es gente ladina, bien trajeado todo, hasta tal vez si busca un lugar. Pero en cambio un indígena lleva un su costal aquí: 'Pase atrás, atrás, atrás. Ahí viene uno!' - y así pasa con otras oficinas de nuestro país.").

[133] "nos ponen entre buenos y malos. Entre los capaces y los incapaces. Entre los comunistas y los empresarios. Entre los ricos y los pobres."

[134] "porque hemos visto que la gran mayoría de jóvenes indígenas que viven en la ciudad no les gusta identificarse como jóvenes indígenas. Hay un rechazo a su historia, hay una negación de su identidad (...) cultural, de su trasfondo cultural, porque identificarse con ese trasfondo significa identificarse con la parte más desventajada, digamos con la parte más excluida de la sociedad."

[135] "en parte una mente colonizadora".

[136] As mentioned in previous chapters, an "identity crisis" could arise, this being "an acute form of disorientation", when a person's interpretative framework has been shattered (Taylor, 1989, p. 27). Consequently, a defeated and helpless community loses agency (Fierke, 2004, p. 488) and either develops an urge for revenge or a sense of inferiority and depression (Luhrmann, 2000).

Therefore, indigenous people do not reclaim their political and social rights with sufficient emphasis and pressure and remain largely marginalised from the political process. Despite all this, the Mayan tradition still has a deep impact on their daily lives. After the internal armed conflict even more indigenous people tried to reaffirm their Mayan heritage and turned from Catholicism to the Mayan religious tradition which is called "*Cosmovisión*" (C7, 2012). That has had direct effects on the process of truth finding through exhumations. In the Mayan religious tradition, it is essential to bury the deceased properly with the corresponding rites.[137] NC2 (2012) observed that the Mayan community speaks of having feelings of sudden terror or fright which are believed to be caused by the deceased relatives who have not been buried with a traditional ceremony and are therefore still present. Consequently, a community who has to live with thousands of "disappeared" people has an additional burden to carry that shapes their identity. Yet fear – be it generated directly or indirectly by military violence – is the main cause of trauma, as NC3 (2012) remarks.

4.4.1.9 Conclusion

The Interviewees of church and non-church background come largely to the same conclusions about the current situation. Almost all think that the wider Guatemalan history has shaped significantly the Guatemalans' attitude towards violence. The colonial invasion and the ensuing oppressive governing systems are believed to be the starting point for a transgenerational transmission of trauma within the indigenous community. This transmission happened through passing on the narratives about this trauma (cf. Weingarten, 2004). Subsequently, discussions about the past consist mostly of black and white categorisations, showing an abyss between the *criollo* and *ladino* part of the population on the one hand and the Mayan people on the other.

The indigenous people have been the more victimised part of the population and were the ones who had to suffer most from oppression and marginalisation. The uprising of the armed opposition during the internal armed conflict was in part a way to stand up for their rights after centuries of silence. However, this attempt brought more suffering than good. The ruling class was willing to protect their status with unspeakable brutality and violence for which the main ideological struggle during that time, the struggle between communism and anti-communism,

[137] As mentioned before, if adequate mourning is not initiated and feelings of humiliation are not reversed, the "traumatized self-image" is passed on to the next generations (Volkan, 1997, p. 45) becoming an "unconscious organizing principle" passed on from one generation to the next, "constituting the matrix within which normal developmental conflict takes place" (Danieli, 2007, p. 69). The trauma becomes part of the cultural identity (Fierke, 2004, p. 488).

served as a justification. It became a fight between good and evil, freedom and communism. The indigenous population had been dehumanised for a long time. Yet what happened during the civil war reached levels that are reminiscent of the gruesome wars during the colonial invasion of the 16th century.

As a consequence, basic trust and security have been destroyed, in some instances beyond repair (cf. Robben, 2000, p. 74), the social fabric had received a blow that damaged the bonds between people and their sense of community (cf. Erikson, 1972, p. 146). Still today, too many Guatemalans make "decisions based on meeting basic needs" (cf. Kantowitz & Riak, 2008, p. 6), disregarding a long-term view of community development.

Even though a new constitution in the 1980s and the peace accords in the 1990s made substantial progress in assuring the same rights for all Guatemalans, society is still deeply divided. Fear and a sense of inferiority are core characteristics of many indigenous people.

In the search for identity, young indigenous people seek to assimilate with the more powerful *ladino* population. In contrast to this, the older indigenous men and women retain consciousness of their Mayan descent and keep alive the memory of all the oppressions since the colonial era. Volkan explains the latter behaviour as a "chosen trauma" (2010, p. 50) arguing that when the large-group's identity is threatened, regression takes place, reactivating sometimes centuries-old shared historical mental representations (see also chapter 2).

Nevertheless, there is no open desire for revenge as one would expect (cf. Gilligan, 1997; Schirch, 2008). In contrast to other traumatised societies, there is no desire for an open fight in order to satisfy feelings of revenge (NC3, 2012; NC5, 2012). Even if right wing politicians and military veterans perceive every trial of members of the security forces as a sort of revenge (NC5, 2012; NC10, 2012), most victims make clear that their main interest is to know the truth and to be able to find the remains of their loved ones in order to bury them according to their traditions. But, as Audergon (2004) remarked, if the pain and outrage is not acknowledged, the urge for revenge remains and the danger increases that history repeats itself (p. 24). In Guatemala, violence is re-enacted in domestic and criminal violence as well as in violence against the self.

Some interviewees have expressed the opinion that the indigenous people have a strong desire to be someone in the society, to escape from being treated as inferior. Still, the desire not to be

oppressed again (ibid.) has no revolutionary tendencies. The “us against them” notion and the desire to protect oneself from oppression are, however, latently present in the indigenous population, which could therefore lead to violent outbreaks in the future. (cf. Volkan, 2006, p. 121)

Freedom from oppression can also be achieved by gaining economic power. On the one hand there is progress in overall education, on the other hand it is much easier to gain power through acts of robbery, through extortion and drug trafficking (Brands, 2011). The increasing power of criminal organisations gives their members a renewed sense of agency by undermining state institutions (ibid., p. 239). This destructive form of agency however, perpetuates the cycle of violence and trauma.

Comparing these findings with the working definition of “community trauma” presented in chapter 2 it becomes clear that Guatemala can be classified as a traumatised community. A large number of indigenous people suffered over centuries from oppression, transmitting trauma to the next generations. Distorted community values – widespread corruption, extremely high levels of crime, fear of claiming one’s own rights, and functioning in a survival mode characterises large parts of Guatemalan society. Feelings of guilt and humiliation are common and there is a tendency to use uni-dimensional or good versus evil narratives. These kind of feelings and these narratives could be the cause for increased group identity. However, it appears that this is not the case within the Guatemalan indigenous community following the end of the internal armed conflict. The reason may be that the military had systematically used indigenous communities in their counterinsurgency efforts. The PAC was one of the main instruments used and caused conflict and division even between family members.

Yet, the current situation could well lead to an increase in group-identity and an “us-versus-them” feeling fomented by the weak justice system and widespread impunity, since most perpetrators are not brought to justice. Questions about land ownership remain largely unresolved and high levels of poverty persist. Consequently, the centuries-old conflict has not yet been resolved. Guatemala seems to have not yet achieved a “post conflict” situation.

During the last few years, many rural communities have actively campaigned against international mining companies for fear of huge environmental damages. This has helped them

in gaining self-esteem and the courage to stand up for their rights.[138] This healthy development, though, poses a challenge for the government and the judicial system. Victims are no longer quiet and are able to find mostly non-violent forms of resistance. If the government fails to acknowledge their legitimate complaints and regards this form of opposition as a danger for the integrity of the country, the old patterns of oppression and violence could reappear.

4.4.2 Overcoming trauma (guiding question 2)

The protests against mining companies give a first glimpse of how traumatised communities gain new strength. By presenting the views of the interviewees, this section deals with the question of what has been done to break the cycle of trauma and how successful these approaches were.

The situation in Guatemala is extremely difficult. Families have lost their relatives and simultaneously many have to live in the same village as the murderers (C11, 2012; NC6, 2012). Refugees came home only to find someone else living in their houses and occupying their land (NC10, 2012). Some people still hope to find their loved ones, although the military has confirmed that there were no survivors after the attack on the village (C10, 2012)[139].

As mentioned, Guatemalan politicians, as in other Central American countries, try to combat societal problems with a "firm hand" (C2, 2012). They argue that violence should be met by more violence, just as it has been done over the past centuries. More of the same brings no real change (cf. Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

NC12 (2012) believes that this approach is connected with unattended traumas suffered by the perpetrators. Many of those who committed atrocities or who were involved in them hold influential positions in the government or the security forces. NC12 remarks that there is a "lack of compassion and understanding as to why the people are the way they are. There is no communal responsibility for the social aspects of the country in order to improve the situation of

[138] Urkidi (2011) remarks that "the indigenous question is a key mobilizing factor in the opposition to mining in Latin America" (p. 557) and that most of the mining licenses granted after the year 2000 affected directly indigenous communities (ibid.). Urkidi concludes that "the resistance to mining has contributed greatly to increasing the relevance of the community in Guatemalan social and political life" (ibid.).

[139] C10 (2012) tells: "A friend of mine (...) lost her father when she was a child. The army came into their village, brought all the men together and murdered them. (...) [She] still suffers a lot [wishing] to find her father alive some day. They never recovered the body. They never got to know exactly what happened, how they killed him. The government did say that they had been murdered and that none of those who had been brought together had survived. But in my friend's mind there is this hope that one day she'll find her father alive." ("Una de mis amigas (...) perdió a su papá cuando era niña. El ejército llegó a su pueblo, reunieron a todos los hombres, los asesinaron. (...) [Ella] sufre mucho todavía, de un día encontrar a su papá vivo. Nunca recuperaron el cuerpo. Nunca supieron exactamente qué pasó, cómo los mataron. El gobierno si dijo ya que si fueron asesinados entonces, que nadie de los que estaban reunidos ese día en el pueblo sobrevivió. Pero en la mente de mi amiga está la ilusión de un día encontrar a su papá todavía con vida.")

these people – and this is the government's duty"[140]. Confronting violence and supporting further processes of healing must therefore have a different approach from just implementing "firm hand" strategies.

4.4.2.1 Dealing with difficult life conditions

In order to break the cycle of trauma and violence, several interviewees point out that the first steps must be to improve the basic living conditions by giving job opportunities or land (C11, 2012; C12, 2012), to improve the population's economic situation (C12, 2012; NC11, 2012), and to provide security (NC1, 2012; NC3, 2012)[141]. NC6 (2012) is convinced that a socially just environment aids the efforts towards reconciliation. NC6 made the observation that former enemies are in general willing to reconcile with each other. Old conflicts, though, erupt as soon as the social injustices of everyday life appear. NC6 concludes: "There was a good willingness at the personal level, but there was no way to build something different on this willingness because there were no structures on the community level or on the country level"[142].

C7 (2012) therefore believes that in order to establish social justice one of the most pressing needs is the reform of the agrarian sector. Yet C7 has no hope that this reform will come anytime soon: "Saying 'agrarian reform' is like saying a bad word because the oligarchy, the landowners are sick with ambition"[143].

C12 (2012) agrees that one of the most pressing needs is to reduce poverty by fostering social justice. C12's emphasis, however, is to improve what Nussbaum (2002) would call "human capabilities": "We won't take away the poverty, we won't take away all the problems"[144], but the challenge is to help people to find peace of mind in the midst of all the past experiences and "to be happy in peace, raising a family in love"[145]. C15 (2012) additionally emphasises the necessity for training centres where people can gradually grow and improve their skills.

[140] "No hay compasión ni entendimiento de por qué la gente están como están. No hay una responsabilidad comunitaria para lo social del país, para mejorar la situación de estas personas – y esto es la función de un gobierno."
[141] NC3 (2012) remarks that security has become a business. Security is sold in the form of armed guards, street controls and sealed in neighbourhoods. NC3 believes that the state itself tries to generate fear in order to sell the security services. C4 (2012) thinks that the overall military presence in Guatemala is not a sign of increased security but merely a sign of the wish to perpetuate an authoritarian style of governance and the belief that only the military forces are able to provide safety.
[142] "Había una buena disposición a nivel personal pero no había una manera de construir algo diferente alrededor de esa disposición porque no habían estructuras a nivel comunitario y tampoco a nivel de país."
[143] "Y decir Reforma Agraria qué es, decir una mala palabra porque la oligarquía, los terratenientes están enfermos de ambición."
[144] "No vamos a quitar pobreza, no vamos a quitar todos los problemas".
[145] "estar contenta en paz, criando una familia de amor."

C4 (2012) saw many of the victims behave in a survival mode. C4 therefore considers it vital to change their patterns of action. They should "recognise their capacities, their abilities, their potentials"[146]. This includes, as NC6 (2012) states, confronting the attitude of holding society in general and the government in particular responsible for one's own wellbeing by teaching the individual to take responsibility for themselves.

This is an extremely difficult task which has been complicated immensely by the increase of drug trafficking. C10 (2012) describes the hopeless situation of many young people:

> "The young men and women don't believe that it is worth going to University for six years, studying hard, putting so much effort into it, their parents obviously cannot pay for University. The government is not going to make the access to University any easier. They have to work in order to pay for University – perhaps at weekends or during the night. (...) Going to University for 6 years, with lack of sleep, being hungry, working a lot – so that after you finally graduate from University you don't have a job."[147]

In contrast, trafficking drugs does not require this hard work and allows one to earn easily as much or more than one would earn as an academic. C10 concludes that it is very challenging for young people to live an honest and community cherishing life and many of them have no hope for their future. It is therefore crucial to "speak out, to come out of the box into which we were put, and to reclaim our rights, what belongs to us as human beings" [148] (ibid.) – not by only talking for them: "(...) we want to teach them to speak for themselves" [149] (ibid.).

Looking at young people in churches, C10 perceives a change in their perception of the church's purpose. Traditionally the church's main purpose was the "salvation of souls"[150]. Yet "the generation that is emerging now is a little more preoccupied with social issues" [151] (ibid.). Youth leaders therefore help them to achieve a new understanding of the Bible that includes the social aspects. The young people start discussing with local politicians that are being invited into the church to give answer to the young people's questions and concerns (ibid.).

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[146] "reconozcan sus capacidades, sus habilidades, sus potencialidades".
[147] "Los jóvenes, las jóvenes no creen que vale la pena ir seis años a una universidad, estudiar tanto, esforzarse tanto, sus papás obviamente no les pueden pagar la universidad. El gobierno no va a facilitar la universidad. Ellos tienen que trabajar para poder ir a la universidad, probablemente fines de semana o en la noche. Entonces hay que trabajar duro para poder pagar la universidad. Ir a la universidad seis años, desvelarse, pasar hambre, trabajar mucho, para después de graduarte de la universidad no tener empleo."
[148] "Hay que levantar la voz, hay que salir del cajón donde nos han tenido y reclamar nuestros derechos, lo que nos corresponde como seres humanos."
[149] "(...) queremos enseñarles a los jóvenes a hablar por ellos mismos."
[150] "salvar almas"
[151] "Esta generación que está saliendo ahora, está un poco más preocupada por la cuestión social."

4.4.2.2 Healing past wounds

Dealing with difficult life conditions is a first step towards breaking the cycle of trauma. Another important step – as mentioned in chapter 3 – is the healing of past wounds.

NC11 (2012) insists on differentiating between the individual level and the political level, "because", as NC11 comments, "sometimes I want to repair it but the political environment, the system in general does not allow it"[152]. Each level would need different sets of tools. On the other hand, NC11 concedes connections and influences between the different levels. If churches, for example, teach their members ethical principles and urge them to be just and impartial, this would have a strong impact on how Christians use their influence to improve living conditions in Guatemala. NC11 is adamant, "(...) what you need is a kind of leadership that is able to give you an orientation with justice, (...) with ethical behaviour, that you are not biased to one side or the other. And it is the leadership that is missing"[153]. Individual behaviour and wellbeing have repercussions on the social and political level in the form of increased participation and agency.

Another example is the individual's struggle for truth about the traumatic events he or she has had to endure. This search for truth connects the individual level with the social and political – and vice versa: the truth finding process has an impact on the individual. C12 (2012) tells the stories of women who "little by little understood what had really happened, that it was not their fault, thus, transforming this lie into the truth"[154]. C12 concludes that uncovering the truth will not be easy, yet it can be the beginning of a healing process (ibid.).

Political action can trigger individual processes; it can provide an environment that supports the individual's development or can disturb and hinder it. Individual processes can have an influence on the community and the social and political decision-making process. These different levels, therefore, need to be distinguished yet not separated. Healing past wounds is a task for individuals, for communities and for a nation as a whole. These different levels have interconnections.

[152] "Porque a veces yo quiero repararlo pero el entorno político, el sistema en general no te permite."
[153] "Lo que tú necesitás es de un liderazgo que te sepa orientar con justicia (...) con ética – no que te inclinés ni del uno ni del otro – y es el liderazgo que hace falta".
[154] "poco a poco ellas entienden lo que pasó en realidad, que no era culpa de ellas. Entonces, transformando esta mentira en la verdad."

The challenge of dealing with the past is huge. C5 (2012) perceives "a lot of pain still in us that hasn't been healed"[155]. These people need special support. C1's (2012) starting point when dealing with the past is the necessity for supporters who speak the victim's native language. NC9 (2012) emphasises respect for the communities' structures. It is vital to empower individuals and communities to gain agency, generating new experiences that help to reconstruct community life. This entails respecting the type of community leadership and the corresponding rituals of interaction. NC9 affirms, "the people have their own ways and rituals in order to intercommunicate and to survive in these structures of high-level conflicts"[156] (ibid.).

C2 (2012) agrees that the culture of the individual and his community needs to be taken into account: "Those of the *ladino* or *mestizo*[157] culture for example, are more expressive ... and know better how to speak about their pain, how to express their feelings, to share their feelings. ... In the case of the indigenous cultures, like the Q'eqchí[158], it is a culture that is a little bit more reserved"[159].

C12 (2012) consequently tries to help the victims to find names for the feelings they have inside, like rage and sadness. Formerly, all feelings they could not name were a "headache"[160] or an "aching heart"[161] (ibid.). C12's organisation tries to pull the victims out of their sadness by encouraging them to talk, to paint, to think and thus creating solidarity among the victims (ibid.). C12 remarks that unfortunately some Christian congregations teach that emotions like rage are sinful. Consequently, victims cannot work with these feelings and their recovery may be hindered. C1 (2012) agrees that too often victims are pressed to get over the past too quickly and to look into the future and go on with their lives in a rush: "They don't allow for the relief which is very important for the person who has suffered"[162] (ibid.).

Still, C1 is convinced that churches play an important role in the process of recovering from trauma by providing spiritual "tools"[163] (ibid.) like prayer – including prayer for the enemy and reading the bible. Victims can rely on God's support when dealing with perpetrators. C2 (2012)

[155] "Hay mucho dolor todavía en nosotros que no fue sanado".
[156] "la gente tiene sus propios estilos y rituales para poder intercomunicarse y sobrevivir dentro de esas estructuras con alto conflicto."
[157] In this case *ladino* and *mestizo* are used as synonyms.
[158] The Q'eqchí is one of the biggest Mayan groups in Guatemala.
[159] "Los de la cultura ladina o mestizos por ejemplo, son más expresivos, (...) entienden más como a hablar más de su dolor, a expresar sus sentimientos, a compartir sus sentimientos. (...) En el caso de las culturas indígenas, como la cultura Q'eqchí, es una cultura un poco más reservada."
[160] "Dolor de cabeza"
[161] "Dolor de corazón".
[162] "Entonces no permiten el desahogo que es muy importante en la persona que ha sufrido."
[163] "herramienta".

thinks that the development of programmes that care for the victims through pastoral and psychological care demonstrates the important role of the church. C7 (2012) shared some personal experiences about recovering in a monastic community:

> "In every service I cried and cried and cried because all I was constantly hearing about was massacres, massacres, massacres and talking about this the whole time it makes you sick. (...) It was a privilege to live in an environment of prayer, reading scripture; that helped me very much, but it wasn't easy"[164].

C10 (2012) also emphasises the positive effect of reading the bible. C10 saw young people gaining strength after hearing certain stories from the bible that opened a new view on how God is caring for the poor and the beaten. This has a considerable impact on how churches position themselves with respect to the problem of violence. C10 says, "(...) for too long they have preached to us about a violent God. A God who is love and a consuming fire, whom no one should anger because if he is angry he kills whoever comes in his way, he is a violent God"[165]. Therefore, more emphasis should be put on the example of Jesus "who loves and denounces, who doesn't keep quiet and that's why they kill him, for not keeping quiet, for speaking out and denouncing the abuses of the system"[166] (ibid.). C10 found that it was immensely significant for the young people to discover that God is actually interested in the wellbeing of each individual. C12 (2012) made the same observation and emphasises the importance of telling the bereaved that God is in their suffering and that grief is not a sin. The victims were often taught that hate is sinful. C12 now wants to teach about God's compassion for those who suffer– along with providing for physical and psychological needs.

In the same way C13's (2012) organisation encourages churches to provide spiritual care along with physical and psychological care. For C8 (2012) it is a sign of real hope, when victims start to feel the presence of God and to live in his presence. C2 (2012) saw how important spirituality was for many students when they had to face violence. C2 affirms: "only a firm spirituality, a profound spirituality, a practical spirituality is able to give the resources to the people to face and overcome moments of violence, of injustice and of pain (...). Many students gained strength

[164] "En cada oficio yo lloraba y lloraba y lloraba porque todo lo que contaba era masacres, masacres, masacres y estar hablando de eso enferma, enferma. (...) Fue un privilegio vivir allí en un ambiente de oración, de lectura de la palabra, eso me ayudó muchísimo, pero no fue fácil."
[165] "(...) por mucho tiempo nos han predicado de un Dios violento. Un Dios que es amor y que es fuego consumidor, que no hay que enojarlo porque cuando está enojado mata a quien se ponga en su camino, es un Dios violento."
[166] "(...) que ama, que denuncia, que no se queda callado y que por eso lo matan, por no callarse, por hablar y denunciar los abusos del sistema."

to resist through prayer, through reflecting on the scriptures"[167] (ibid.). C2 explains that these spiritual practices were part of the search for resources to help them survive. As a result "they could hold firm to their faith and thus were able to face the difficult hours they had to endure"[168](ibid.).

NC11 (2012) thinks that the church in general has an important role to play in the process of individual and communal recovery, even at a national level, by providing leaders with sound ethical convictions. Churches have an influence on their members when urging them to be just in their actions. It is, however, unfortunate that a number of churches are solely interested in their own wellbeing in terms of increasing membership and economic prosperity and are not willing to be involved in any project for the wider community (C14, 2012).

When dealing with the wounds of the past, many interviewees, not only the church related experts[169], emphasised spirituality as an important source of resilience. However, C8 (2012) expresses concern about the lack of additional factors that nurture resilience: "The church is a factor of resilience, but this factor has to be supported by other factors that are missing"[170], such as by finding meaning in the family, at work, and in other aspects of life.

NC9 (2012) made the observation – while working with a wide range of human rights organisations – that the Guatemalans' overall resilience was assessed as being in general very high. NC9 fears that those who praise high levels of resilience might be tempted to be less engaged in fighting against the unjustifiable human rights violations. NC9 exclaims sarcastically, "You have to live through so many traumatic situations because you have such high levels of resilience – what a nice person you are that you can tolerate this type of problem!"[171] This opinion underscores the connection between individual and societal levels of action. The individual's resilience has to be matched by social and political actions to put an end to the sources of pain. The astonishing examples of people who are resilient in the face of traumatic experiences[172] should not detract from this necessity. NC9 emphasises that it is necessary "to

[167] "únicamente una espiritualidad firme, una espiritualidad profunda, una espiritualidad práctica es la que le puede dar también los recursos a la gente para enfrentar y superar los momentos de violencia, de injusticia y de dolor (...) Muchos estudiantes hallaron fuerza para resistir en la oración, en la reflexión de la escritura"
[168] "aún pudieran (...) mantener esa fe para poder enfrentar las horas difíciles que tuvieron que pasar."
[169] NC6 (2012), NC8 (2012), and NC11 (2012) mention at several points of the interviews the importance of their own Christian spiritual experiences or of those they were working with.
[170] "La iglesia es un factor de resiliencia, pero ese factor tiene que estar apoyado con más factores que hacen falta."
[171] Vos tengás que vivir tantas situaciones traumáticas porque tenés una resiliencia tan grande que – qué buena onda que vos podás tolerar ese tipo de cuestiones.
[172] A mother whose child had been murdered told C8 (2012), "I am not scared anymore because my greatest fear already happened, my son died, so that I am not scared anymore in this life." ("Yo ya no tengo miedo porque mi temor más grande ya sucedió, mi hijo murió, entonces yo ya no tengo nada más de miedo en la vida."

include elements of citizenship and rights in which the people also reach a moment of conscience, saying, 'I cannot continue to tolerate these situations, we have to act in a different way'"[173] (ibid.).

Yet to act differently involves high risk. Gaining agency is extremely dangerous. Death threats have become common and almost everyone is able to hire a killer for a small amount of money (C10, 2012). C10 knows, "it involves a high risk to change a system in which violence is forgotten and impunity remains. Who is going to do it? This is the question: who is willing to do it? It is difficult, it scares, it scares a lot"[174] (ibid.).

NC10 (2012) however, perceives the willingness of victims to go on with life and to refuse to lose hope. NC10 sees this resilient behaviour especially among the indigenous communities. NC10 comments:

> "What they wanted was to take up the thread and to resume weaving their lives. And that is the only way they could look into the future, because they wove what they had left, they gathered what they had left and this is a line of thought that doesn't exist in western Guatemala, but in the indigenous Guatemala, of the indigenous people. And many times, when I told them that they wanted revenge it was because they too had not been able to weave these threads together again, and they wanted to deprive others in the same way they have been deprived"[175].

Asked about their hopes for the country, many interviewees mentioned children and young people. Their optimism, their will to live, and their new ways of thinking are believed to be signs of a better future. C13 (2012) remarks that the children they are working with "are expressing themselves more frequently, they participate in activities like singing, mime, drama, things they previously wouldn't have done"[176]. Children are now able to attend school on a regular basis and finish their primary education – something those who had been raised during the conflict did

[173] "tenemos que trabajar estos elementos concretos de ciudadanía y de derechos donde la gente también llega a un momento de conciencia, de decir: no puedo yo seguir tolerando este tipo de situaciones, tenemos que actuar de manera diferente."
[174] "implica un gran riesgo tratar de cambiar un sistema donde la violencia se olvida y se deja en la impunidad. ¿Quiénes lo van a hacer? Esa es la pregunta: ¿quiénes están dispuestos a hacerlo? Es difícil, da miedo, da mucho miedo."
[175] "Lo que ellas querían era retomar los hilos para volver a trenzar su vida. Y solo así, pueden entonces ver al futuro, porque trenzaron lo que les quedó, juntaron lo que les quedó y es un pensamiento que no se tiene en esta Guatemala occidental, pero sí en la Guatemala indígena, de los pueblos indígenas. Y que muchas veces cuando yo le decía que querían venganza era porque también no habían podido trenzar nuevamente los hilos y querían despojar como habían sido despojadas."
[176] "se expresan un poquito más, participan en actividades de canto, de mimos, de dramas, cosas que anteriormente ellos casi no se expresaban."

not have the opportunity to do (ibid.). C5 (2012) adds: "I've got hope when I see the children, boys and girls, young men and women who are taking a new perspective on their faith (...). They are making a good combination between their faith and their actions"[177]. NC12 (2012) observes that young people are aware of Guatemala's history and the political problems, and that is why "they want to do something for their beloved Guatemala. There is a strong loyalty and a strong commitment and that's what really makes me happy"[178].

This hope for the future helps to give meaning to the Guatemalan people. As elaborated in chapter 3, finding meaning is a central aspect in the process of coping with traumatic experiences. Victims deal with the question of finding meaning in very different ways. NC11 (2012) found that coping with trauma needs a mixture of rationality, and spirituality - understanding what had happened on the one hand and practicing spiritual exercises on the other. C8 (2012) has learned not to ask "why", "because there are no answers, but to say: 'now that this has happened to me, what can I do to go on?'"[179]. C2 (2012) observes that individuals value the fact that they have been growing through the times of distress. C2 tells about a woman who had to endure severe losses who said:

> "I still don't understand the reason for what happened. (...) [This event] brought much pain and suffering into my life. But now (...) after all these years I am convinced that it helped me to grow, it helped me to be better, it helped me to strengthen my faith (...). With this I am not justifying what had happened, but I have to mention that the event was like a school of growth, of learning"[180].

For some victims the process of finding meaning starts only after their pain is acknowledged and the process of truth finding begins. NC6 (2012) observes that the victims begin to rekindle relationships with family and friends after the acknowledgment of their suffering has taken place. They say: "The first thing I am going to do is to begin to change within my family (...) because I noticed that with my injuries I was injuring"[181]. Even those who had terrible losses like losing their children, husband or wife, were able to give new meaning to their life. NC8 (2012)

[177] "tengo esperanza en los niños, en las niñas, en los jóvenes y las señoritas que están tomando otra perspectiva de la fe (...). Ellos están haciendo muy buena combinación entre su fe y su accionar."
[178] "quieren hacer algo por su querida Guatemala. Hay mucha lealtad y mucho compromiso y eso me alegra mucho".
[179] "Porque no hay respuestas, sino decir: 'ahora que me ha pasado esto, ¿qué puedo hacer para seguir adelante?'"
[180] "aún no logro entender por qué pasó lo que pasó. (...) Lo que pasó y eso me produjo mucho dolor y sufrimiento en la vida. Pero ahora (...) después de los años, de lo que sí estoy seguro, segura, es que aquello me ayudó a crecer, aquello me ayudó a ser mejor, aquello me ayudó a fortalecer la fe (...). Con esto (...) no estoy justificando lo que haya pasado pero sí debo mencionar que aquello fue como una (...) escuela de crecimiento, de aprendizaje".
[181] "lo primero que voy a hacer es empezar a cambiar alrededor de mi familia (...) porque me di cuenta de que con mis heridas yo estaba hiriendo".

saw cases where the victims began to give new meaning to their life "after having travelled a journey through the expression of pain, expression of anger (...). They discover that they are able to reconnect with society, that not all was lost and that there are forms of recovery, above all having the opportunity to go on with life"[182].

New narratives emerge out of these new meanings. Some of those, who were born long after the conflict, discover that their grandfather was killed by the military and subsequently develop a sense of pride for having someone in the family who was a real patriot (NC7, 2012).

NC7 (2012) already perceives changes in the society's narratives. During the internal armed conflict, NC7's work was denounced as the work of a communist. Being either a communist or an anti-communist was the most important characteristic of one's identity and distinguished between friend and foe. However, in today's narratives, this dichotomy plays a minor role and standing up for the poor and oppressed is widely recognised as of greater importance than one's political identity. NC7 notes that 70 % of the Guatemalans are younger than 30 years. These young people, who were not involved in the struggles of the internal armed conflict, are growing up in an environment that is rarely concerned with the ideological fights of the past.

C1 (2012) believes that it is crucial to shape the narratives of the past by teaching children the history of the country, without omitting its difficult parts. The grownups should "tell the truth, how it happened and how we saw it"[183] (ibid.). Thus, developing new narratives and giving new meaning to one's life is emerging only gradually. All too often there is silence around this topic. C1 (2012) is convinced that the history of what had happened during the internal armed conflict, as well as during the larger history of colonial and post-colonial oppression, must be told to the children so that this kind of tyranny and cruelty won't happen again. Yet this is still a controversial subject. NC1 (2012) notes that influential parts of Guatemalan society oppose critical teaching about these topics and denounce any such attempts as ideological manipulation.

This opposition is accompanied by a widespread attitude that justifies violence. If someone suffers from domestic or state inflicted violence, the public opinion is that the person must have done something to deserve this sort of punishment. NC3 (2012) observes that if a dead body is

[182] "con un recorrido de expresión de su dolor, expresión de su enojo (...) [Ellos] descubren que pueden reconectarse a la sociedad, que no todo está perdido y que hay formas de recuperarse sobre todo teniendo la oportunidad de seguir viviendo."
[183] "tenemos que (...) contar la verdad como pasó y cómo la vimos"

found on the streets and if this person had some sort of tattoos that could indicate membership of one of the hundreds of violent youth gangs (Maras), the people around would rather applaud than show concern. This attitude of tolerating violence begins with a violent pedagogy in families and schools. NC3 remarks: "We have been creating a system of justifying violence that traumatises and that needs to be de-justified. ... Society itself has many justifications that we have to expose and discuss extensively"[184] (ibid.).

NC6 (2012) is convinced that a mental change or a "de-colonisation of the mind"[185] is necessary, in order to adequately deal with the past. NC6 argues that this colonial attitude is still prevalent in large parts of the population, which means that the main patterns of societal interactions are defined by domination (mainly non-indigenous) and the acceptance of subordination (mainly indigenous). It is therefore important to build a society that treats all its citizens with dignity and respect. People who know their dignity are able to dream beyond dire realities and they are capable of initiating positive change (ibid.) even though in many villages the victims are constantly reminded of their past by their victimisers who live in the same neighbourhood.

4.4.2.3 Complexifying identities

The dichotomy between communists and anti-communists has lost its power, yet other dualistic narratives persist. Since the Spanish *conquista* Guatemalans were classified according to their ethnicity and social status. At times, the ruling class denied even their common humanity with the indigenous population. In addition, during the internal armed conflict, the military brutalised the mainly indigenous members of the Civilian Self-Defence Patrols (PAC) along with the regular armed forces to such an extent that they were prepared to kill even their relatives.

It is a common pattern in Guatemala to reduce the other's identity to only a few characteristics. The most influential categorisations are *criollos*, *ladinos*, and *indigenas*. As noted before, until the mid-eighties the indigenous people had almost no rights. Still today, indigenous people are often treated with less respect and are politically marginalised. NC1 (2012) comments on the

[184] "Hemos sido creando un sistema de justificaciones a la violencia que traumatiza que necesitamos desjustificarlas. (...) La sociedad misma tiene muchas justificaciones que necesitamos ponerlas en blanco y negro y discutirlas muy ampliamente."
[185] NC6 recalls a not further specified speech from the former minister of education Demetrio Cojtí where he urged the indigenous population to decolonise their minds.

prevalence of racism in Guatemala: “Today in the work environment it is a little bit less, there are laws, but within the culture racism is very strong”[186].

Complexifying identities requires a change in the belief about others and the self by adopting new patterns of identity (Schirch, 2008, p. 93). This time consuming process continues to be relevant almost two decades after the signing of the peace accords in Guatemala.

Therefore, in addition to dealing with difficult life conditions and healing past wounds, the Guatemalan population needs to complexify its identity (cf. Sen, 2006, p. 16) by seeing the other in a different light. NC3 suggests that in order to live once more as a community, the “encounter with each other”[187] (ibid.) is most important. It is necessary to get to know each other. NC10 (2012), however, complains that the country never came together just to listen to each other. Only some parts of the country recognised the truth commissions (REMHI (*Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*) and the CEH (*Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico*))[188].

NC12 (2012) agrees that it is necessary to bring people together in order to share their experiences: “It is very good to talk about the experiences (...) because this normalises them.”[189] Telling stories helps people to recover from traumatising experiences and leads to the humanisation of the other. C15 (2012) compares the broken fabric of society (*tejido*) with the Guatemalan women’s ability to weave beautiful fabric (*tejido*). C15 believes that it is necessary to reconstruct the fabric of society, which is like a fabric “with many colours, many patterns ..., and that’s how it has to be until we learn to respect our diversity”[190] (2012)

This diversity needs to include recognition of the language and customs of the different ethnic groups in Guatemala as an integral part of basic human rights (cf. Nussbaum, 2007b) . C4 (2012) argues that “recognising the different forms of expression in a country, speaks precisely about this unity”[191], where all inhabitants want to form one nation by valuing their different backgrounds. The centuries old exclusion from participation in society of the indigenous people has led to a deep division. Those who excluded the indigenous population are reluctant to

[186] “Hoy día a nivel laboral es un poco menos, hay leyes, pero en la cultura el racismo es muy fuerte.”
[187] “reencuentro de los unos con los otros”.
[188] Particularly business representatives (CACIF, *Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras*) emphasise the need for leaving the past behind in order to achieve peace (cf. CACIF, 2013)
[189] “es muy bueno hablar sobre las experiencias (...) porque esto lo normaliza”
[190] “de muchos colores, muchas figuras (...), y así tiene que ser hasta que aprendamos a respetarnos en nuestra diversidad”.
[191] “el reconocimiento de las diversas formas de expresión de un país habla precisamente de esa unidad”

concede them the same rights as they themselves enjoy. Guatemala has not yet acknowledged sufficiently its multilingual and multicultural character (ibid.). Some churches are particularly hesitant about granting equal religious freedom rights to those who practice Mayan spirituality (ibid.).

NC2 (2012), however, notes that the population in the rural areas has learned to claim its rights and thus to have an increased sense of citizenship. After centuries of oppression, many indigenous people turned to their Mayan beliefs as a source of pride and as a distinguishing feature that reaffirmed their identity (C7, 2012). NC11 (2012), is convinced that the CEH helped significantly in dealing with the problem of racism by making it visible – even if "there haven't been measures taken to solve that problem thoroughly"[192].

A rather ambivalent example of complexified identities is the alliance between poor indigenous people and poor *ladinos*. NC3 (2012) observed that *ladinos* and indigenous people have begun to understand each other better because both groups share the same fate of poverty and oppression.

4.4.2.4 Conclusion

Guatemala has made considerable progress towards a stable democracy with free elections and the peaceful transition of governments. However, good laws do not guarantee their implementation. Corruption, impunity and violence are part of everyday life in Guatemala.

Admittedly the situation is extremely complex. Drug trafficking, as well as other forms of organised crime, pose a major threat to stability. Innovative solutions to the drug problem are missing. The United States, the main destination for drugs from Latin America, is critical of the idea of implementing new approaches to the war on drugs, e.g. legalising drugs under certain conditions (Associated Press, 2012).

Many Guatemalans function in survival mode making short-term decisions and re-enacting the trauma violently against themselves or others. This diminishes or even impedes posttraumatic growth (cf. Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), the finding of new meaning, and the development of new narratives (cf. Sedmak, 2010). Even many churches avoid dealing with the past and

[192] "tampoco se han tomado medidas para resolver (...) ese problema de fondo".

therefore do not help in overcoming the trauma in their congregations[193] (C10, 2012; C14, 2012; C15, 2012; C16, 2012).

Numerous projects in Guatemala aim at helping people to deal with the past and to overcome trauma, yet they fail to establish interaction between the individual, the communal, and the governmental levels. Successful approaches usually remain on a small-scale level confined to a small neighbourhood or church community without support from the government. Unfortunately, the government is often unwilling to learn from the most successful projects (NC9, 2012). On the contrary, the government's preferred solution still seems to be meeting violence with violence. It is, however, necessary to change the patterns of learned violence. During large parts of history, violence had been justified. Dealing with Guatemala's past therefore means to "de-justify" violence and to increase awareness of how the security forces should use coercive measures.[194]

Guatemala has many individuals with an impressive creativity and there are non-governmental organisations that deal tirelessly with the difficult past and present. At the same time, there is a staggering level of violence within families and communities. There are courageous prosecutors and judges who stand up against intimidation. Simultaneously, there are many cases of institutional failure and those who want to uncover the truth live in constant danger of their lives.

The interviews reflect this situation. Most report about projects that aim to enhance the living conditions of individuals and communities. Education programmes are set up; psychosocial support is offered to victims of violence; young people are taught to express their needs and take responsibility for their lives; churches offer spaces for mourning and spiritual support. However, many feel that their efforts are being frustrated, because issues like social injustice, land issues, and abuse of power through corruption[195] remain mainly unaddressed at the national level. Good education, for example, which is expensive and unaffordable for many young people, is usually the prerequisite for escaping from poverty.

[193] C16 (2012) remarks frustrated: "There are churches that promote an escape from reality and this is like a drug." ("Hay iglesias que promueven escaparse de la realidad y esto es como una droga.")
[194] During non-violent protests in October 2012, soldiers killed six and injured 30, when they were called to support the local police. The president of Guatemala, Otto Perez Molina, immediately announced a limitation to the army's deployment within the country to the combat of organised crime. Those directly responsible for the massacre have been jailed and are awaiting their trial (Gonzáles, 2012) – even though it is not yet clear who gave the order to shoot. The opposition fears that high-ranking military commanders and politicians involved in this incident are being protected (Prensa Libre, 2012b).
[195] According to Transparency International Guatemala has a percentile rank of 35 % on the corruption index (Transparency International, 2012).

The interviewees emphasise that many of the root causes of the current problems lie in a series of historic events and the subsequently developed patterns of learned behaviour. The interviewees see the need to work on a shared and complex view of history (cf. Staub, 2007, p. 341) and to acknowledge the suffering of the many victims. Events like the *conquista*, the fight for independence, the internal armed conflict, in sum, the centuries-long oppression of large parts of the population belong to the history of Guatemala and have consequences to this day. It is therefore necessary to deal with this history. It is a history that is full of experiences of disempowerment (cf. Becker, 2006, p. 184).

An important step on the way towards healing past wounds and to start empowering people again, is acknowledging the history of oppression and violence (ibid.). The fact that the government as well as the leaders of the guerrilla groups did not accept the CEH-report reduces hopes for a better future and blocks a consensus on historic events. Yet, if the cycle of trauma is to be broken, an inclusive and shared history is essential. History has to be "de-colonised" (cf. NC6, 2012), which means that historic accounts have to dignify those who have suffered and have been silenced through the history books. Many Guatemalans still prefer silence rather than dealing with the past.

This failure to acknowledge the suffering of large parts of society obstructs and even hinders private and public mourning processes which are important for coping with trauma, as Volkan (1997, p. 36) notes: "humans cannot accept change without mourning what has been lost" (cf. Figley, 2006b). As mentioned in chapter 3, individuals, who are at peace with their own past, are better able to actively shape their future.

Nonetheless, some influential individuals and organisations are actively searching for further evidence of the crimes committed in the past. In addition to the thorough investigations conducted by the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) and the project for the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI), the evaluation of the documents of the archive of the former national civil police (*Archivo de la Policía Nacional Civil*) had an enormous impact on establishing evidence of the atrocities committed by the police. Similarly, the exhumations conducted by the Guatemalan Foundation for Forensic Anthropology (*Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala*) confirmed the statements recorded by the CEH and REMHI, thus, leaving no doubt about the accuracy of their findings.

Many Guatemalans have proved to be remarkably resilient. Interviewees from a church background report how faith in God and help from the church community enabled traumatised people to overcome their traumas and to gradually begin a new life. C2 (2012)believes that "the power of the gospel has also helped a lot in the sense that it could help to heal, to cure those injuries"[196]. Many Christians found comfort and hope in the New Testament's grand Christological narrative.

Nonetheless, key factors that could increase the level of resilience have been damaged (cf. Masten, 2009, p. 29). The fabric of society had been damaged especially during the internal armed conflict and its aftermath. Villages had been destroyed, children had lost their parents, families found themselves forced to move to the capital, losing their social network and facing disastrous living conditions. Many have been abandoned to their desolate fate by society (cf. Cyrulnik, 2009a, p. 17).

An additional element in dealing with the past is to complexify identities (cf. Schirch, 2008; Sen, 2006). In Guatemala, identities are mainly defined by the categories of ethnicity and social status. Although the tensions that could be evoked by this dualistic characterisation of identity are generally hidden, indigenous people in particular feel marginalised. Additionally, a referendum held in 1999 as part of the peace accords from 1996 to improve the situation for indigenous people failed (Bornschein, 2009, p. 265; Ochoa García, 2002, p. 162). The main reasons for the failure were that the referendum contained changes to the constitution that were unrelated to the peace accords and that the opponents campaigned massively against this referendum by stirring up fear (Bornschein, 2009, p. 265).

Complexifying identities entails identity transformation (Schirch, 2008, p. 93), working through shame (Marks, 2009) and thus, being at peace with oneself. This process is especially difficult for many indigenous people. They are the ones who suffered most throughout history. On the other hand, many of them were forced to commit atrocities as part of the Civilian Self-Defence Patrols (PAC).

An inclusive history, acknowledgment of the past, finding meaning, developing a new narrative and complexified identities are key factors for dealing with the past and overcoming trauma. (cf. chapter 3). Even though there are many initiatives that are moving in the right direction, there is

[196] "creo que ayudó mucho también el poder del evangelio en este sentido para poder ayudar como a sanar, a curar aquellas heridas."

still a long way to go towards a restored community that supports the development of restorative identities.

4.4.3 The way towards reconciliation (guiding question 3)

Reconciliation played a major role in the interviews and was usually linked to questions about impunity and forgiveness. Not surprisingly, interviewees differed substantially in their viewpoints depending on their church or non-church backgrounds. In the end, however, all agreed about the necessity for reconciliation. NC4 (2012) however, is convinced that transitional justice, with its main topics being memory, truth, justice, and guarantee of non repetition, is a prerequisite for speaking about reconciliation and forgiveness. NC5 (2012) agrees by pointing out that it is not possible to talk about reconciliation "in a country that has not yet exhausted the necessary steps for talking about the past"[197].

On the other hand, C1 (2012) thinks that it should easily be possible, after so many years, to forgive what had happened during the internal armed conflict and to achieve reconciliation. C3 (2012), also closely linking forgiveness and reconciliation, is even convinced that peace would already have been reached if forgiveness and reconciliation had been a central element of the peace accords. Moreover, C3 blames non-governmental organisations for blocking peace and reconciliation:

> "A peace accord was signed, but there was no forgiveness. So, there are international organisations that are interested in keeping their status or their influence and they keep fostering and supporting those groups who always are in opposition, showing their disagreement. And that's why a permanent peace cannot be reached"[198].

In the same way that all interviewees valued reconciliation, they were also convinced that truth and justice play an important role – even if it was regarded as a final step in a series of important issues.

The next section therefore analyses the different positions on truth, impunity, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

[197] "en un país que no agota los pasos previos que hay para que se pueda hablar del pasado."
[198] "Se firmó un acuerdo de paz, pero no hubo perdón. Entonces, hay organizaciones internacionales que les interesa mantener su estatus o su proyección y siguen fomentando y apoyando a aquellos grupos que siempre están en oposición, manifestando su inconformidad. Y por eso es que la paz no se logra completamente."

4.4.3.1 Truth, memory and justice

Almost all interviewees agree on the importance of truth finding for any process of reconciliation. C1 (2012) remarks: "I believe that truth is the foundation because, if I don't know for what reason a person did an offence, I cannot forgive them"[199]. C4 (2012) agrees by stating: "In order to reach reconciliation, we obviously have to start from knowing the truth"[200]. NC3 (2012) is convinced that finding the truth is the minimum that has to be done: "How can I be reconciled if they haven't even told me where [the victim] is, or what happened, or who it was?"[201] NC9 (2012) adds: "Memory means: this happened, has happened but it will never happen again"[202]. NC9 believes that keeping the memory of the events alive is important for future generations. Already today, the young generation is not interested in talking about the violence of the past and has therefore no point of reference for ethical decisions. Thus, NC9 is convinced that historical memory

> "permits to increase the level of consciousness and the rational understanding that this type of action is not normal. And that's why you can see in the history of a country like ours and others, like El Salvador, Honduras and all these, that we haven't reached this type of process and we end up voting again for the same tyrant [i.e. in 2012 the newly elected president, ex-military general Otto Perez Molina]"[203].

NC2 (2012) perceives a change in the attitude of victims and victimisers as soon as they are confronted with the truth, established, for example by exhumations. NC2 remarks: "Many of the [victims'] histories about many family members were refuted, were denied, were silenced, so, in the moment these exhumations took place, there is again a huge increase of dignity"[204]. On the other hand, the army had to admit, that their victory in the internal armed conflict was a victory over women and children. NC2 is convinced that the exhumations weakened the military's position during the peace negotiations. NC10 (2012) is glad that the military's conviction that there would be no evidence for their cruelties, proved wrong:

[199] "Creo que la verdad es el fundamento porque si yo no sé por qué razón hizo una persona una ofensa yo no la puedo perdonar."
[200] "Para poder llegar a una reconciliación obviamente tenemos que partir del conocimiento de la verdad."
[201] "Cómo me puedo reconciliar yo si ni siquiera me han dicho dónde está, o qué pasó, o quién fue?"
[202] "Memoria significa: esto existe, ha existido pero nunca más volverá a pasar."
[203] "permite (...) elevar al plano consciente y racional que este tipo de actos no son normales. Y entonces por eso es que ves en la historia de un país como el nuestro y como otros, como El Salvador, Honduras y todos estos, que no hemos logrado llegar a este tipo de procesos y terminamos votando nuevamente por el mismo verdugo."
[204] "Muchas de las historias de muchos familiares de ellos fueron desmentidas, fueron negadas, fueron acalladas y entonces el momento de esas exhumaciones hay un nuevo levantón de dignidad."

> "The bodies speak, the victims speak and all those who have been buried, the communities remembered, someone remembered, where their family members had been buried or where there had been a clandestine cemetery"[205].

In addition, the archives from the national civil police helped in the truth finding processes. NC10 comments:

> "The administrative archive ... bears witness to the chain of command, to the modus operandi, to how they were involved and how the operations were carried out, we don't know how. They thought that [the archives] would never be found or they gave the order to somebody to destroy them and he never did it"[206].

For NC11 (2012) the search for truth is closely linked with dignity:

> "It is important, I believe, to discuss the topic of truth, because this definitely has to do with – all has to do with the dignity of the human being, respecting you as a human being"[207].

C4 (2012) is concerned about those who want to omit the step of truth finding, saying that "some want to jump from the end of internal armed conflict, turn the page and, well, forget the past, but perhaps this is not possible"[208]. Many Guatemalans completely oppose working on historical memory. C5 (2012) recalls the discussion about historical memory and the failure to include the events of the past in the history books in an adequate manner. C5 finds the role of the protestant church especially disturbing:

> "Is there or is there not going to be historical memory? Are we or are we not going to include in the textbooks what happened in Guatemala? There was no agreement, because the protestant church sadly was more closely allied to the right wing than to the communities"[209].

[205] "los cuerpos hablan, las víctimas hablan y todas las que fueron enterradas, las comunidades recordaban, alguien recordaba, dónde habían enterrado a sus familiares o dónde había habido un cementerio clandestino."
[206] "El archivo administrativo (...) va a dar fe de la cadena de mando, del modus operandi, de cómo se involucraron o cómo se hizo el operativo, no sabemos cómo. Pensaron que nunca los iban a encontrar o le dieron la orden a alguien que lo destruyera y nunca lo hizo."
[207] "El tema de la verdad creo que es importante estarlo discutiendo porque eso sí tiene que ver, todo tiene que ver con la dignidad del ser humano el respeto a ti como ser humano."
[208] "algunos quieren saltarse de la finalización el conflicto armado interno, pasar la página y ya pues, olvidar el pasado, pero eso no es posible, pues."
[209] "¿Va haber memoria histórica o no va haber memoria histórica? Lo proponemos en los libros textos, lo que pasó en Guatemala o no lo proponemos. No hubo acuerdo, porque la iglesia evangélica lamentablemente estaba más alienada [sic! C5 probably meant to say: 'aliada'] con la derecha que con las comunidades."

Many victims and most perpetrators are inclined to turn down any attempt at creating historical memory: the perpetrators out of shame for what they have done and/or out of fear of prosecution, the victims out of fear of the perpetrator's revenge for revealing the truth or out of fear of waking up old ghosts that torment the victims' souls. C12 (2012), who has worked with victims since the end of the internal armed conflict notices even today that many do not talk about their experiences: "No one talked, out of fear"[210]. C14 (2012) described similar experiences stating that it was better to "forgive and leave it there, because telling the truth it is not safe"[211]. C11 (2012) was a witness when a group of students wanted to talk with a group of women who had suffered much during the internal armed conflict. The students wanted to know what the women thought about recent court cases where some of the key perpetrators had to face trial. C11 reported:

> "When the women heard this, well, they got scared. Why are they doing this? Isn't it possible that it will start again if they do this? Suddenly the whole problem comes back. Suddenly it will be a problem for our grandchildren and children"[212].

C11 concludes: "So this is the reaction when someone talks about what has happened. (...) Then it seems to be better not to talk, silence, because I saw the reaction"[213]. Talking about the past seems dangerous and many victims just do not know how to deal with the past.

Keeping silence supports impunity even more. C1 (2012), however, is convinced that "justice has to judge the person that did the damage and give the punishment according to the customs or laws that prevail in the society where the damage was done"[214]. Although C13 (2012) believes that access to justice has significantly improved, C1 (2012) thinks that money generally determines the outcome of a law suit.

NC11 (2012) shifts the focus to the question: what kind of justice does a victim want? NC11 remarks:

[210] "Nadie estaba hablando, por miedo."
[211] "perdonar y ahí que se quede, porque no hay una seguridad para decir la verdad."
[212] "Y cuando escucharon las señoras, pues les entró miedo: ¿y por qué hacen esto? ¿Y será que no se levantan cuando se hace esto? De repente vuelve otra vez ese problema. De repente va a ser problema para nuestros nietos, hijos."
[213] "Entonces como que esa es la reacción cuando se habla algo de lo que ha pasado. (...) Entonces como que es mejor para la gente no hablar nada, silencio, porque yo vi la reacción."
[214] "la justicia tiene que como juzgar a la persona que hizo el daño y darle su castigo de acuerdo a las costumbres o códigos que prevalecen en la sociedad donde se da el daño."

> "We have to discuss carefully our understanding of justice and that legal justice doesn't encompass the kind of justice that you want because many times, what you really want is the acknowledgment of the other person"[215].

NC8 (2012) is convinced that legal justice can partly be a form of acknowledgement, which ultimately could help to generate more dialogue about forgiveness: "If [the perpetrator] receives a punishment, not a personal punishment, but a punishment from the society itself (...) then [the victims] have the capacity to forgive"[216] . C16 (2012) also emphasises the importance of justice in the process of forgiveness:

> "I believe that forgiving doesn't mean that there won't be a process of justice. I can forgive a person, but this person has to abide by the law. I can forgive that person for my own peace of mind and for the wellbeing of the other. But this doesn't mean that on a social level this person cannot be tried by the law of the countries"[217].

4.4.3.2 Forgiveness

The positive link between truth, memory, and justice on the one hand and forgiveness on the other was apparent in almost all interviews. As the previous quotes show, some consider forgiveness and penal justice as belonging together. For NC8 (2012) the basis for forgiveness is a court decision because the sentence is a sort of compensation for the damage. It is therefore the state's duty to prosecute the perpetrators and not to forgive the atrocities through legal inactivity. C7 (2012) exclaims: "A state can never forgive! (...) The *Ministerio Público* [the ministry that is in charge of criminal prosecutions] cannot forgive, it has to initiate court cases"[218]. Otherwise, the climate of impunity would be encouraged. For C7 it is also inadequate for the Guatemalan government to ask the victims for forgiveness: "As long as there is no justice, judicial processes and acknowledgment of the crimes – how can someone ask the people to forgive! Whom? Whom are they supposed to forgive?"[219]. NC3 (2012) adds: "The

[215] "Hay que discutir bien qué estamos entendiendo nosotros por justicia y que la justicia legal no engloba esa justicia que tu querés porque muchas veces tu lo que querés es el reconocimiento de la otra persona."
[216] "Si recibe un castigo, pero no un castigo personal, sino un castigo que la sociedad como tal le dé (...) entonces, sí están en capacidad de perdonar".
[217] "Creo que el perdonar, no quiere decir que no se siga un proceso de justicia. Yo puedo perdonar a una persona, pero ella tiene que seguir lo que dice la ley. La puedo perdonar para mi propia tranquilidad y para bienestar del otro. Pero eso no quiere decir que socialmente ella no pueda seguir apelada a la ley de los países.
[218] "¡Jamás! ¡Un Estado no puede perdonar! (...) El Ministerio Público no puede perdonar, debe iniciar procesos legales."
[219] "Y mientras no haya justicia, procesos de justicia, de reconocimiento de los crímenes – cómo se le puede pedir a la gente que perdone. ¿A quién, a quién van a perdonar?"

government asks for forgiveness, but as soon as we want to know the truth they don't listen to us"[220].

C1 (2012) concludes: "I believe that truth is the basis for forgiveness"[221]. C2 (2012) is also convinced that "forgiveness (...) between two parties is only possible if there is acknowledgement of the damage that has been done and if people speak the truth (...). Forgiveness cannot be built on a lie"[222]. NC9 (2012) adds: "Forgiveness is not, well, to wipe the slate clean, no. Forgiveness is: I can forgive you, but I cannot exempt you from your social responsibility"[223] . In the opinion of NC9 this social responsibility includes keeping the memory and guaranteeing non-repetition and the "*Nunca Más"* or "never again" in an allusion to the REMHI report led by the Guatemalan archbishop Juan Gerardi.

It is striking that many interviewees with a non-church background as well as those with a church-background agree on the important link between forgiveness and truth, memory and justice. However, some of the interviewees take a different stance. A few interviewees with a non-church background find it difficult to talk about forgiveness and would rather stress the importance of combating impunity (NC4, NC5). This opinion might be triggered by the rather controversial view of some Christians regarding impunity. The comment of C6 (2012) might partly serve as an example for the differing views on impunity: "I hear the voice of the people"[224] – meaning those who have a critical opinion towards imprisoning elderly offenders like Efraín Rios Montt. C6 continues quoting these people: "Why did they arrest them? Let them die peacefully in their beds; after all, they will have to pay one day for all they did to the Guatemalan people"[225]. C6 thinks that the trials against perpetrators of war crimes are a sign of revenge: "One can perceive the feelings of revenge in the people"[226], i.e. in those, who call for prosecution. C6 then contrasts this behaviour with his understanding of Christian forgiveness by giving an example:

> "Perpetrators, who returned, live in T.; the brothers [members of the church] know perfectly well that they [those who returned] were the perpetrators and they know that

[220] "El gobierno pide perdón: Pero cuando queremos saber la verdad, no nos atienden."
[221] "Yo creo que la verdad es el fundamento del perdón."
[222] "el perdón (...) entre dos partes sólo es posible cuando hay reconocimiento del daño que se ha hecho y cuando se habla con la verdad (...). El perdón no podría construirse sobre una mentira."
[223] "Pero el perdón no es, bueno, borrón cuenta nueva, no. El perdón es: yo puedo perdonarte, pero no te puedo eximir de la responsabilidad social."
[224] "oigo la voz del pueblo"
[225] "'¿Para qué los tienen? Que se mueran tranquilos en su casa, después de todo tendrán que pagar un día todo lo que hicieron contra el pueblo de Guatemala.'"
[226] "Se percibe el sentir de venganza todavía de la gente."

> their own children and relatives were victims. But... they really learned to forgive and there they are, with no desire for vengeance, because if they had a desire for vengeance then they would have already taken it– and they didn't ... I understand that they have God's peace in their mind. They do not even ask to imprison them, knowing who they were, who they are, there is no feeling of revenge"[227].

All interviewees with a church-background agree on the necessity of forgiveness, yet with the exception of C6 no one agrees with equating criminal prosecution with revenge. C11 (2012) even believes that this equating is the cause of even more harm. The frustration and disappointment about a justice system that does not fulfil its duty triggers widespread acts of revenge in the form of lynchings.

The interviewees with a church-background agree with C6, however, that forgiveness and leaving feelings of revenge behind is necessary. C2 (2012) remarks that forgiveness is one of the most important ways to overcome enmity:

> "Many of us are coming to understand that we cannot confront violence with more violence, instead we have (...) to learn to look at the people that have offended us and then, after a long process, perhaps, to learn to forgive"[228].

For C2 "the most difficult and most painful part was precisely this, to forgive ones enemies"[229] (ibid.). Yet C2 is adamant about forgiveness: "It is often a troubled path, because it is not easy to see the people that have done so much harm to us and who offended us and to forgive them; but yes, it can be achieved, it can be achieved!"[230] (ibid.). C2 is convinced that through acts of forgiveness the love of God becomes real and peace between humans is possible (ibid.).

Conceding the importance and necessity of forgiveness, some interviewees with a church background, however, lamented the widespread misuse of the biblical call for forgiveness. C10 (2012) is frustrated with the way churches teach about forgiveness:

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[227] "Victimarios que regresaron viven en T.; saben muy bien los hermanos que fueron los victimarios y saben que sus hijos y familiares fueron víctimas. Pero (...) de verdad aprendieron a perdonar y ahí están sin ningún sentimiento de venganza, porque ya lo hubieran hecho, ya hubieran cobrado la venganza y no lo han hecho, (...) Entiendo que tienen la paz de Dios en su mente. Ni están pidiendo que los encarcelen sabiendo quiénes fueron, quiénes son, no hay sentimiento de venganza."

[228] "Muchos estamos llegando a entender de que no podemos enfrentar la violencia con más violencia, si no como que (...) aprender a mirar a las personas que nos han ofendido y después de todo un proceso quizá aprender a perdonar."

[229] "la parte que me fue más difícil y más dolorosa fue precisamente eso de perdonar a los enemigos."

[230] "Es un camino tormentoso en muchas ocasiones, porque no es fácil poder ver y perdonar a las personas que nos han hecho demasiado daño y que nos han ofendido, pero sí, eso se logra."

> "They've taught us to forgive those who harmed us. This is the traditional preaching in our church. When a wife is beaten by her husband we tell [her]... : 'forgive your husband, love him, give him love. Don't report him, don't go to the police, don't go to the authorities. That won't help anything. Love him, forgive him and one day God is going to do a miracle and is going to transform your husband's life.' – Well, if he doesn't kill her first; but this is what we say in the churches, you have to forgive. Forgiving is understood as leaving all abuses unpunished. Not seeking justice. Not fighting for the rights of each person, each individual. (...) It is more like keeping it secret, not even talking about the things that we suffer from, simply forgive and forget"[231]

This way of dealing with forgiveness is not always due to pure theological conviction. The current situation of insecurity and impunity also shapes the way churches teach about forgiveness. Seeking truth and justice, as mentioned above, can be very dangerous. Linking forgiveness with impunity might therefore just be the safest way to deal with the past. As mentioned before C14 (2012) observes: "There is no safety when you tell the truth, so, it is easier to ask for forgiveness"[232]. C11 (2012) tries to explain the origin of the situation:

> "Many times impunity comes out of fear. It scares me to think of what they would do if they were to find out that I reported this event, and well, it is out of fear. And this fear, I believe (...) has come because [of] the army, perhaps the army, at least in part; but perhaps the fear has possibly come from 500 years back, from the Spanish domination"[233].

C9 (2012) in particular criticises a simplistic understanding of forgiveness explaining:

> "Real forgiveness leads to a new situation in which the harm doesn't continue. And this is a very difficult step, especially if there is a simplistic theology saying: 'You have to forgive, you have to forgive, you have to forgive.' Because it seems to me that

[231] "Se nos ha enseñado a perdonar a quien nos hace daño. Es la prédica tradicional en nuestra iglesia. Si la esposa es golpeada por su esposo le decimos a [ella]: 'Perdone a su esposo, ámelo, dele amor. No lo denuncie, no vaya a la policía, no vaya a las autoridades. Eso no va a arreglar nada. Ámelo, perdónelo y algún día Dios va a hacer el milagro y va a transformar la vida de su esposo.' Si no la mata antes pues, pero es lo que decimos en las iglesias hay que perdonar. Perdonar se ha entendido como dejar en la impunidad todos los abusos. No buscar justicia. No pelear por los derechos de cada persona, de cada individuo (...). Es más, mantener en secreto, ni siquiera hablar de lo que sufrimos, simplemente perdone y olvide."

[232] "No hay seguridad, para decir la verdad, entonces es más fácil pedir perdón."

[233] "La impunidad muchas veces se hace por miedo. Me da miedo saber qué van a hacer de mí si llegan a saber que yo denuncio tal hecho y pues es por miedo. Y ese miedo yo creo (...) ha venido [por] el ejército probablemente el ejército, tal vez parte; pero también probablemente el miedo tal vez ha venido desde los 500 años atrás por la dominación de los españoles."

forgiveness cannot leave the situation as it was, but instead it has to lead towards a new reality"[234].

This means that forgiveness should aim at changing the situation and encouraging the offender to ask for forgiveness. C2 (2012) emphasises: "But perhaps what is most important for the victim is to understand that he who offended him really wants to take steps to show his repentance for what he has done, that's where I believe the truth becomes important, where restitution and reparation are important as part of a process of forgiveness"[235].

C15 (2012) is convinced that the honest plea for forgiveness would not be declined by the victims. C15 met many people who were ready to forgive saying: "If they come to me asking for forgiveness and tell me 'I killed your father' or 'your son, but I ask you to forgive', I would give it immediately without demanding anything in return"[236]. C15 explains: "I believe that the people have a very, very generous heart (...), even though these are burdens carried over 25 and 30 years"[237].

Nonetheless, some interviewees with a non-church background are concerned about quick forgiveness that releases the perpetrator prematurely from his responsibility. In their opinion the victim should be of central concern. NC8 (2012) stresses that forgiveness should be primarily for the wellbeing of the victim: "We also work with forgiveness, but not forgiveness because the aggressor might deserve it, instead forgiveness that works for one's own wellbeing, to unload the emotional burden"[238, 239].

NC3 (2012) mostly avoids the topic of forgiveness. NC3 believes that "if in the first place there hasn't been a process of maturing that begins with acts of reparation for the harm, the trauma,

[234] "El perdón real debe llevar a una nueva situación donde el daño no sigue. Y eso es un paso muy difícil especialmente si hay una teología simplista diciendo: hay que perdonar, hay que perdonar, hay que perdonar. Porque me parece que el perdón no puede dejar la situación tal como está, sino debe conducir a una nueva la realidad.
[235] "Pero que quizás lo más importante para la víctima es entender que quien le ofendió sí realmente quiere dar pasos para mostrar su arrepentimiento por lo que hizo, ahí es donde yo creo que es importante la verdad, donde es importante la restitución y la reparación como parte de lo que es un proceso de perdón."
[236] "Si a mí me viene a pedir perdón y me dicen 'yo maté a tu papá' o 'a tu hijo, pero te pido perdón', yo se los doy inmediatamente sin pedir nada a cambio."
[237] "Yo creo que hay un corazón muy, muy generoso en la gente (...), a pesar de que son cargas de 25 y 30 años que se lleva".
[238] "Trabajábamos el perdón también, pero no el perdón porque lo merezca un agresor, sino el perdón de función de su propio bienestar, de descargar su peso emocional."
[239] C2 (2012) also emphasises the value for the wellbeing for those who forgive, especially when the offender does not show signs of regret or is unknown: "We have to learn to set ourselves free, in order to be able to live, because otherwise we drown in bitterness our entire life and this won't be right for us nor for our children, for the other people that relate with us". ("Tenemos que aprender a liberar, digamos eso también para poder vivir, porque de lo contrario entonces nos hundimos en la amargura por toda la vida y no va a ser justo ni para nosotros, ni para nuestros hijos, para las otras personas que se relacionan con nosotros").

talking with people about forgiveness is very complicated"[240]. In addition, NC3 experienced that the perpetrators demand forgiveness, without concrete signs of repentance: "But they ask me for forgiveness in an abstract way"[241]. On the other hand, NC3 concedes that perpetrators may feel the urgent need to be forgiven. NC3 tells the story about people who were forced to kill:

> "There were people during the war who were forced to kill their own people. I recall a case of some villagers from B. (...); when the army comes to the place, it identifies some alleged collaborators with the guerrillas. [The army] brought them to the centre of the village and told those who belonged to the patrol [i.e. members of the PAC]: 'Well then', they were 50 or more, they said: 'Every one of you is going to line up and is going to give them a blow with a stick until they are all killed.' And they all had to kill. They had to line up and beat them up. There were five people under arrest. And the people from the same community killed them with sticks. Subsequently they all went up to [the city of] S., to which B. belongs, to go to the parish priest from the church to confess, terribly traumatised because of what they had to do in order to defend their lives"[242].

NC3 concludes: "We also have got the topic of self-forgiveness (...). This has not been dealt with yet (...). These are topics, I believe, that are still unknown here"[243] (ibid.).

4.4.3.3 Reconciliation

The topic of reconciliation is equally difficult. For some, forgiveness and reconciliation seem to be almost synonymous. For others, reconciliation does not necessarily entail forgiveness. Again others regard forgiveness as being part of reconciliation among other important topics. Especially for interviewees with a church-background, forgiveness is an integral part of all reconciliatory efforts.

C16 (2012) gives a broad definition of reconciliation:

[240] "Si primero no ha habido un proceso que madure a partir de la reparación del daño, del trauma, hablar del perdón a la gente es bien complicado."
[241] "Pero me están pidiendo un perdón en abstracto."
[242] "Aquí hubo gente en el marco de la guerra que fue obligada a matar a su propia gente. Yo recuerdo el caso de unos pobladores de B. (...); que cuando el ejército llega allí identifica a unos supuestos colaboradores de la guerrilla. Los lleva al centro de la aldea y a los que eran patrulleros les dijo: 'Bueno entonces', eran como 50 o más, les dijo: 'Cada uno de ustedes en fila va a pasar y le va a dar un palazo hasta matarlos a todos.' Y todos tuvieron que matar. Tuvieron que pasar y apalear. Eran 5 detenidos. Y los mataron a palos los mismos comunitarios de allí. Y al otro día todos subieron a S., que a eso pertenece B., con el párroco de la iglesia a confesarse, terriblemente traumatizados de lo que tuvieron que hacer porque era defender su vida."
[243] "Entonces también había un tema de auto perdón (...). Eso menos se ha trabajado todavía (...). Esos son temas desconocidos creo yo todavía aquí."

> "For me reconciliation is when all is in balance, the relations between people and the relation with our environment (...). I believe that for a reconciliation to happen here, we logically need to know the truth with mercy, we have to forgive, we have to forgive sincerely, we have to have a positive mind and we have to see the other person with his virtues and defects and love him despite all this. We have to mature a lot, emotionally and spiritually; I believe we cannot reach a perfect reconciliation, I believe this doesn't exist, but let us make steps every time"[244].

In summary, reconciliation is about restored relations that are built on truth and mercy, on forgiveness and love. Moreover, those who are on the way towards reconciliation know about its inherent imperfection yet will not let themselves be discouraged by this.

For C2 (2012) reconciliation could be achieved through processes of restorative justice based on God restoring relationships through forgiveness. C2 perceives a growing number of theologically educated Christians who stress the importance of restoring instead of punishing, arguing that

> "in theological terms, the gospel invites us to forgive and to use the kind of justice that is restorative, that is transformative. (...) If biblical justice were eminently punitive, then God's forgiveness would not reach anyone (...), because perhaps all of us would be subject to punishment for one reason or another. (...) If we look at (...) the gospel we realise that God is a God who restores"[245].

C2 (2012) is convinced that reconciliation efforts based on elements of restorative justice need to link forgiveness with the acknowledgment of the harm done, with repentance and restitution. Even then this could lead to a different political approach in dealing with the past and present violence. C2 finds that Christians who support restorative justice say:

> "We can neither repair nor compose this society by destroying those who harm, destroying those people who offend, those who commit crimes, we cannot compose

[244] "Para mí una reconciliación es cuando hay un equilibrio en todo, tanto entre las relaciones de las personas, como el medio ambiente (...). Creo que para que haya una reconciliación aquí, lógicamente tenemos que conocer la verdad con misericordia, tenemos que perdonar, tenemos que perdonar sinceramente, tenemos que tener una mente positiva y tenemos que ver a la otra persona con sus virtudes y defectos y amarla a pesar de eso. Tenemos que madurar emocional y espiritualmente mucho, creo que no podemos llegar a una reconciliación perfecta, creo que no existe, pero que vayamos dando pasos cada vez."

[245] "teológicamente el evangelio nos invita al perdón y utilizar una justicia que sea más restauradora, que sea más transformadora. (...) Si la justicia de la biblia fuera una justicia eminentemente castigadora entonces el perdón de Dios no alcanzaría a nadie (...) porque quizá todos por alguna u otra razón seríamos sujetos de ser castigados. (...) Cuando vemos (...) evangelio nos damos cuenta de que Dios es un Dios que restaura".

society that way. The only way to heal this society is to follow ... the way of the gospel, which is a way that invites us to heal and to forgive"[246].

C6 (2012) believes that the results of forgiveness must lead to restored relations. Citing 2 Cor 5:17[247] C6 remarks:

> "The old things have passed and now all things are made new. And in this newness of life rests forgiveness, forgiveness according to our God. Not taking revenge; yes, he did to me, I don't forget. But no, it stayed behind, let's go forward, my brother, I hug you. He was my enemy, I hug him. Let's go in peace"[248].

C3 (2012) stresses how important it is that reconciliation with God entails reconciliation with other people. The relationship with God would be "incomplete" if someone were not willing to be reconciled with others. C3 remarks: "It is easy to find Christian groups or people or families who don't relate with other people because they were offended by them (...). But it is not possible to have an authentic relationship with God if there is resentment, hatred"[249].

C2 specifies the role of the gospel in more general terms: "I always say that reconciliation is the heart of the gospel, for example, in Christ reconciliation is established between God and us, but also reconciliation between old enemies is established in Christ"[250].

C10 (2012), however, believes that within the churches more effort to foster reconciliation between people is needed. C10 thinks that the reason lies with the way forgiveness is understood: "Our understanding of forgiveness is to forget. But that is to leave it unpunished. So, therefore, the topic of reconciliation – we haven't treated it a lot, we lack a lot of knowledge about this very important part of human life"[251]. Consequently, C10 thinks that reconciliation could only happen, if the past is acknowledged. Denial obstructs reconciliation.

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[246] "No podemos arreglar y componer esta sociedad destruyendo a los que dañan, destruyendo a las personas que ofenden, a las que hacen crimen, no podemos componer la sociedad así. La única forma de sanar lo que es esta sociedad es siguiendo (...) el camino del evangelio, que es un camino que nos invita a sanar y a perdonar."
[247] "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (NIV, 2011)
[248] "Las cosas viejas pasaron y aquí todas son hechas nuevas. Y en esa novedad de vida está el perdón, el perdón según nuestro Dios. No tomar venganzas, sí, me hizo, no olvido. Pero no, se quedó atrás, vamos adelante, mi hermano, lo abrazo. Era mi enemigo, lo abrazo. Vamos en paz."
[249] "Y es fácil encontrar grupos de, o personas o familias cristianas que no se relacionan con otras personas porque fueron ofendidas (...). Pero no es posible tener una relación auténtica con Dios si existe un resentimiento, un odio".
[250] "Yo siempre digo que la reconciliación es como el corazón del evangelio, por ejemplo en Cristo se establece la reconciliación entre Dios y nosotros, pero también en Cristo se establece la reconciliación entre antiguos enemigos."
[251] "nuestro entendimiento de perdón es olvidar. Es dejar en la impunidad. Entonces el tema de reconciliación, no lo hemos sinceramente, no lo hemos trabajado mucho, desconocemos mucho de esta parte importantísima en la vida de los seres humanos."

This demonstrates how church members with their differing views on forgiveness have also different opinions about how to achieve societal reconciliation. For some, there is no need to dig deeper into the past. For others political efforts to achieve reconciliation after the internal armed conflict have not fulfilled their aim and need to be dealt with again (C5, 2012). C5 explains:

> "The reconciliation in Guatemala looked for improvement in civil sectors and there were none, all remained on paper. So, it is a betrayal. And they [those, who feel betrayed] say: 'Well, (...) please, let us reconcile, but not how they did it 15 years ago. OK? We are going to do this seriously and we are going to do this thoroughly. So, we have this reconciliation like something that wasn't very genuine and deep"[252].

C4 (2012) agrees that key recommendations made by the Commission for Historical Clarification in order to achieve reconciliation have not been implemented:

> "Dignifying the victims, purging the security forces, providing information about access to the justice system, about deducing who is responsible, prosecution of those who were responsible: that hasn't happened, it has happened in a very limited form"[253] .

C7 (2012) therefore thinks that real changes within society are necessary for reconciliation to happen:

> "So, the process of reconciliation without real changes, without an agrarian reform, without justice for the intellectual authors of the massacres, without a justice system that provides police protection for the judges who are being threatened, there can't be reconciliation"[254].

Referring to Robert Schreiter's book "Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order" (1992), C12 (2012) emphasises the need to expose the "narratives of the lie" (cf. Schreiter, 1992, pp. vii, 29). C12 made the observation that many women feel guilty about what happened during the internal armed conflict because of the propaganda during the years of war. Even today, many people in the rural areas know very little about the causes of the conflict and

[252] "La reconciliación en Guatemala buscaba mejoras en los sectores civiles y no los han habido, todo quedó en papel. Entonces es una traición. Y dicen: Bueno, (...) por favor vamos a reconciliarnos, pero no como lo hicieron hace 15 años. ¿Si? Lo vamos a hacer en serio y lo vamos a hacer profundo. Entonces tenemos esa reconciliación como algo que no fue muy genuino y profundo."
[253] "La dignificación de las víctimas, depuraciones de los cuerpos de seguridad, puesta a disposición de información para el acceso a la justicia, para la deducción de responsabilidades, enjuiciamiento a responsables. Eso no se ha visto, se ha visto en una forma bastante mínima."
[254] "Entonces el proceso de reconciliación sin cambios reales, sin una Reforma Agraria, sin justicia para los autores intelectuales de las masacres, sin un sistema de justicia que sea respaldado por la fuerza de la policía para defender a los jueces que son amenazados, no puede haber reconciliación."

about what happened during those years. The journey towards reconciliation should therefore entail a truth finding process and the provision of mental health care, so that the victims can recover gradually.

Most interviewees with a church-background are convinced that reconciliation is ultimately a gift from God. Nevertheless, they do not deny the importance of mental health care and the necessity for social and political development. Yet nobody can be forced to take steps towards healing. Forgiveness cannot be forced, but God can change people (C11, 2012). It is God, who makes us "gentle and humble"[255] (ibid.). Reconciliation is therefore possible through the change that God effects in an individual (ibid.).

Interviewees from a non-church background would not necessarily consider forgiveness to be an important part of reconciliation. NC1 (2012) remarks:

> "I don't believe that the starting point for reconciliation should be forgiveness, I believe that the starting point of a social reconciliation is the acknowledgment of the other person, not even the acknowledgement of the harm, it is the acknowledgment of the other person's dignity and from this point the acknowledgment of the harm. Then, the intention to restore and then, out of this intention, the reconstruction of trust, and then this whole process, you can call it a process of reconciliation, in which forgiveness is an element that appears in the context of relationships."[256]

This emphasis is due to NC1's experiences with people who find it extremely difficult to be reconciled. NC1 observes:

> "For many people reconciliation means to lose the little dignity they had been able to preserve: 'If you are reconciled, you let others twist your arm and you lose your dignity. The person not only harmed you, there is not only what they did to you, on top of that you let them go and you forgive'"[257].

NC3 (2012) thinks, that

[255] "dócil y humilde"
[256] "No creo que el punto de partida de la reconciliación sea el perdón, yo creo que el punto de partida de una reconciliación social es el reconocimiento de la otra persona, ni siquiera del reconocimiento del daño, es el reconocimiento de la dignidad del otro y a partir de ahí el reconocimiento del daño. Luego la intención de restauración y luego de esa intención la reconstrucción de la confianza y entonces a todo ese proceso tú le podrías llamar un proceso de reconciliación, que el perdón es un elemento que aparece en el plano relacional."
[257] "Reconciliarse significa para mucha gente perder lo poco de dignidad que logran conservar: 'Si te reconcilias das tú brazo a torcer y estás perdiendo toda tu dignidad. No sólo la persona te daño, no sólo lo que te hicieron sino que encima tu los dejas pasar o los perdonas."

> "it is possible to reconcile without forgiving (...) in its strict sense. Ultimately, I am going to be reconciled, ultimately I am living my life, I won't have any problems (...) with this person, but that doesn't mean that I forgave what he did to me or what he did to us (...) But I have to live my life in peace because I cannot continue living in conflict (...) I have to take care of my other children (...), I have to take care of my finances, my future"[258].

Consequently, NC3 believes that reconciliation is primarily "a mechanism resulting from a healthier life"[259]. Therefore, the focus should centre on improving the living conditions of the people. Reconciliation is basically when people go on with their lives and decide to not think about the events of the past.

However, not all interviewees are that sceptical about forgiveness. NC9 (2012) is convinced that forgiveness and reconciliation are fundamental factors in dealing with the past: "So, when the different groups perceive that a space for dialogue is possibly opening, a space for acknowledgment of the mistakes and errors is possibly opening: in that moment forgiveness and reconciliation could be fundamental factors."[260]

Nevertheless, NC9 also places some *caveats*, commenting that pursuing reconciliation could sometimes even be damaging. NC9 is convinced that sometimes it is better for people to go their separate ways, especially in cases of domestic violence.[261]

NC11 (2012) observed that some victims deliberately chose not to seek reconciliation, not even to enter into a process of psychological recovery from the traumatic events. NC11 observed that

> "many times the victims don't want to enter into a mental health recovery process because they believe that within the process of de-structuring and restructuring of your personality you can lose the impulse for the fight you are carrying on"[262].

[258] "es posible reconciliarse sin perdonar (...) en el sentido estricto. Finalmente yo me reconcilio, finalmente yo llevo mi vida no voy a tener más problemas (...) con esta persona, pero no quiere decir que haya perdonado lo que me hizo o lo que nos hizo ¿no? Pero tengo que llevar mi vida en paz porque no puedo seguir en conflictividad, que sé yo. Tengo que atender mis otros hijos, tengo que atender a mi economía, mi futuro."
[259] "un mecanismo de una vida más sana".
[260] "O sea que cuando ya los grupos empiezan a percibir que hay una posibilidad de espacio de diálogo, que hay una posibilidad de espacio de reconocimiento de las faltas y de los errores. En ese momento el perdón y la reconciliación pueden ser factores fundamentales."
[261] "Now, it is not our mission to keep families united because it could be more damaging than beneficial as much for the couple as for the children." (NC9, 2012) ("Ahora la familia no es nuestra misión tener unida porque puede ser más dañina que beneficiosa tanto para la pareja como para los niños.")
[262] "muchas veces las víctimas no quieren pasar ese proceso de salud mental porque creen que entre ese proceso de desestructuración y reestructuración de tu persona tu puedes perder el impulso de la lucha que vas llevando."

NC4 (2012) thinks that reconciliation is sometimes an aim that is out of reach. When victim and victimiser have to live in the same village or neighbourhood, the only way to survive is "to establish something like an agreement of co-existence"[263]. NC4 concludes: "I don't know if you could call this reconciliation or is it a survival strategy"[264]. NC5 (2012) admits that a genuine reconciliation would be ideal, creating "a multicultural society, being respectful of diversity"[265]. This kind of reconciliation is, however, not in sight. NC5 hence argues that the normative concepts of this ideal reconciliation "clash with a social reality that is very hard, very hard"[266].

4.4.3.4 Conclusion

The terms truth, impunity, forgiveness and reconciliation are debated passionately in Guatemala. Most agree that all these terms make an important contribution to the issue of dealing with the past. More difficult, however, is to determine the connection between these terms. Does forgiveness need truth? Or is it the other way around: does truth need forgiveness? Does reconciliation need truth and forgiveness? Or should we rather accept that reconciliation is an unattainable ideal?

Not surprisingly, interviewees from a church-background emphasise different aspects from interviewees from non-church organisations. The former interpret forgiveness and reconciliation from a biblical perspective, emphasising the teachings about God's reconciliatory work through Jesus Christ. The latter base their view on psychological and sociological findings. However, most interviewees from a church-background insist that it is also necessary to consider these psychological and sociological findings. Conversely, many interviewees from a non-church background are by no means alienated from the church and the Christian faith and therefore also emphasise Christian aspects of reconciliation.

It became apparent during the interviews that definitions of the key terms "truth", "forgiveness", and "reconciliation" vary significantly. Some regard the terms forgiveness and reconciliation as an inadequate way of dealing with severe crimes because they may pose a threat to the victim's dignity (cf. NC1, 2012); others regard these terms as a costly yet necessary part of healing the wounds of the past and shaping a better future (cf. C2, 2012).

[263] "(...) establecer como un cierto pacto de convivencia."
[264] "No sé si eso se podría llamar reconciliación o es una estrategia de sobrevivir."
[265] "una sociedad multicultural, respetuosa de la diversidad."
[266] "chocan con una realidad social que, que es muy dura, muy dura."

Some demand truth, others regard processes of truth finding as disruptive for a peaceful coexistence in Guatemala. Some people want to live in peace by opposing any attempts to remember the times of war and unrest. Others insist on remembering, stating that without remembering a society is unable to learn from its past. Without remembering, new ethical criteria are lacking for how to deal with dissent and overcome violence as the predominant learned behaviour and the most common reaction to differing opinions. These interviewees are therefore convinced that there can be no peace, if this behavioural pattern is not considered critically and changed.

The main reasons to oppose truth-finding are fear and shame. Victims are afraid of being victimised again for reporting the truth, or they are ashamed of what happened to them. Victimisers fear the consequences that would result if the truth about the past is revealed. Many would feel deeply ashamed if everybody knew about the crimes they had committed. Victims and victimisers therefore react with defence mechanisms. Victims tend to keep quiet; perpetrators insist on forgetting the past or start defending their previous actions vehemently. Consequently, those who report crimes, as well as judges and prosecutors, are in constant danger, even though the judicial situation in Guatemala has improved considerably during the last decade (cf. Prensa Libre, 2012a). Victims with a strong Christian conviction are inclined to legitimate their silence by professing a form of forgiveness that rests on forgetting the past. In this they agree with the perpetrators' conviction that the past should be buried and forgiveness be granted. An alliance emerged between some churches, political organisations, and members (and veterans) of the security forces promoting this kind of forgiveness and thus contributing to a "conspiracy of silence".

However, the interviewees made it clear that this kind of solution to deal with the wounds of the past neither meets the real needs and expectations of the victims nor leads to an honest reconciliation. Most interviewees are adamant about the necessity of signs of repentance like the acknowledgment of the suffering, the making of reparations, the guarantee of non-recurrence, and the effectiveness of the justice processes. In Guatemala, this view has gradually gained support. The Ministry of Internal Affairs increasingly prosecutes cases that are

inconvenient for parts of the ruling class. Numerous organisations support victims. In addition, there is considerable international pressure on the government to protect basic human rights.[267]

It is no wonder that a clear definition of forgiveness and reconciliation is missing in Guatemalan society. Because of this, non-church agents are inclined to reject these topics, possibly fearing that these topics support impunity. For many churches, on the other hand, these topics seem to be too complicated. Therefore they tend to have simplistic views about forgiveness and reconciliation.

In addition, it is unclear if the individual level on the one side, and the communal or national level on the other, need different approaches to truth, forgiveness and reconciliation. Only one interviewee mentioned that approaches towards forgiveness and reconciliation on the individual level should be separated from those on the collective level (NC11, 2012). Even though these two levels are interconnected, a clear differentiation could help to define adequate approaches for each level. Some interviewees expressed their convictions that, on an individual level, it is possible to abstain from any compensation for losses, yet on the collective level the government should ensure that justice is served according to the laws of the country.

4.5 Theory and praxis: the results so far

On the subject of the theories regarding individual and community trauma the opinions stated in the interviews were largely expected, yet they also offered some surprises. Community trauma was earlier defined as the traumatisation of a group with a shared identity, of which a large number experienced either a traumatic event, or had been influenced by the trauma of other group members. This resulted in trauma sparking community trauma, or trauma arising through transgenerational transmission mechanisms (biological, psychological, familial, and societal). Community trauma was described as being characterised by distorted community values, by functioning in a survival mode, and by feelings of guilt and humiliation leading to an increased group identity that sees the group as a victim. Uni-dimensional and good-versus-evil narratives prevail, which dehumanise the enemy and may ultimately lead to new violence in an attempt to achieve justice.

[267] The United Nations established the *Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala* (CICIG; International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala) whose main task is to foster a culture of justice, by supporting the Public Prosecutor's office, the National Police and other state institutions in their criminal investigations.

The interviewees saw most of these factors present in Guatemala: unresolved trauma that was transmitted over generations, chosen traumas, distorted community values, dualistic narratives, and ongoing violence. Typically, these factors of community trauma result in widespread examples of acting in a survival mode, avoiding dealing with the past, and a lack of compassion or sense of responsibility for the community. Unresolved deeper conflicts re-surface after apparently peaceful times because of minor conflicts and persisting injustices. The acknowledgement of the victims' suffering is, at best, reluctantly demonstrated.

However, indigenous people in general do not seek revenge for the harm they have suffered. Group identity has only increased marginally and political parties that promote the rights of the indigenous people are weak. As mentioned before, young indigenous people in the cities try to hide their indigenous background while indigenous parents, like any parents, are eager to provide a better life for their children through good education. Ethnic identity and claiming rights for one's own ethnic group is not central in political discussions. Even though most victims of the war and of the injustices done by the ruling classes ever since the conquest of the country by the Spanish were indigenous, ethnicity is not used as a way of gaining power and influence. Unlike in Rwanda, where political leaders fuelled ethnic tensions in order to increase their power, in Guatemala ethnicity has not been used as a political tool.

Guatemalan society discusses coping with trauma and dealing with the past along the lines of improving overall living conditions and dealing with the country's narratives, i.e. its history with an emphasis on truth, impunity and forgiveness. This discussion, however, is still at an early stage. A common history is not yet within reach and the value of truth-commissions as well as of the trials of former military leaders are debated hotly. Understandably enough, in this situation claims arise to let bygones be bygones. Dealing with the past seems too difficult and an impediment to a reconciled society. On the other hand, an environment of impunity promotes an atmosphere of violence and subsequently self-administered justice from those victims who find no support in the justice system.

Consequently, the discussions about truth, impunity and forgiveness remain central. Opinions vary between "forgive and forget" on one side and combining forgiveness with disclosing the truth, acknowledging the suffering of the victims, taking responsibility by compensating for the damage where possible, and accepting societal punishment on the other side. The "forgive and

forget"-approach is mainly advocated by former and current political and military leaders, the business community, and parts of the church. In contrast, human rights groups, victims organisations, and, again, other parts of the church support the approach to hold victimisers responsible for their actions.[268]

As described in the cycle of trauma, in a setting of community trauma victims and perpetrators typically differ in their views about how to shape society's future. Surprisingly, though, the number of organisations that oppose an attitude of silence about the past is very high. Unlike in Rwanda, these groups were active even during the civil war with considerable influence and taking high risks in supporting victims of violence. Many Guatemalans, both indigenous and non-indigenous, were able to transform their experiences into non-violent activism (e. g. *Grupo Apoyo Mutuo* (Bornschein, 2009, p. 74), *Acción Católica* (CEH, 1999, chap. I, sect. 199-207; Poitevin, 2004, p. 41)). The civil war ended with peace talks without a certain group being able to claim victory. Thus, no party had the power to dictate how history should be remembered, leaving it disputed. The difficult discussions about truth, justice and impunity continue. However, these discussions provide space for the victims' experiences in society's memory and prevent a hasty and superficial peace at the expense of the weak. This situation requires patience and continuous initiatives that promote the reconciliation of society in a way where all sides of the conflict feel heard.

As described earlier in this chapter, the churches in Guatemala reflect the society's division. Personal political preferences and safety issues shape theological convictions. Even though there was considerable church opposition to the security forces' violence, many churches sided with the ruling class and were therefore not able to provide a prophetic voice during the civil war[269]. This is surprising, as particularly the churches in the rural area became a place of refuge for the battered population. Their hardship and suffering was clearly visible to all and did not stop at the churches' doorstep. In order to avoid persecution by the state's security forces, many of those churches concentrated their theology on reconciliation with God leaving aside the

[268] The different opinions do not correlate neatly to ethnic groups. Individuals from all ethnic groups were targeted by military violence just as members from all ethnic groups had suffered from guerrilla violence.

[269] C1 (2012) remarks:"During the armed conflict there were only few churches that were dedicated [to opposing violence]. Among them we could name the Iglesia Centroamericana. The Mennonite Church. The Baptist Church. The Catholic Church. Parts of the Lutheran Church. (...) Groups from these Churches got involved and suffered persecution. (...) However, the majority of the churches remained silent. They didn't stand up for their opinion. They continued as if there was no conflict in the country." ("Durante el conflicto armado fueron pocas las iglesias que se comprometieron. Dentro de ellas podríamos decir la iglesia Centroamericana. La iglesia menonita. La iglesia bautista. La iglesia católica. Una parte de la iglesia luterana. (...) Grupos de estas iglesias se involucraron y sufrieron persecución ... Sin embargo, la mayor parte de las iglesias se quedó callada. No emitió opinión. Y continuó como que si en el país no existiera un conflicto.") (cf. C2, 2012; C5, 2012; C9, 2012; C10, 2012)

need for reconciliation in the communities and the country. The interviewees listed a number of theological convictions that led to this attitude, among which the following were most influential: 1. Caring for the needs of society is against the will of God and is a sign of the "Anti-Christ" – blessed are the poor, but since they are blessed, there is no need to improve their fate (C14, 2012); 2. God is violent and punishes violently, therefore, violence is a legitimate way of dealing with conflict (C10, 2012); 3. One of the most important aspects of Christian faith is to prosper economically (C15, 2012; NC3, 2012); 4. People who suffer should not grieve or show signs of anger, as these expressions of feelings are considered to be sinful (C12, 2012).

These convictions could be described as a sign of psychological dissociation. The churches who hold these beliefs deny the serious problems that society was facing and still faces. Not acknowledging the gross human rights violations is a safe way of not having to take a stand against powerful and violent political and military leaders. Even after the war many churches opposed in-depth discussions about the past and wanted to prevent teaching in schools of the historical facts about the atrocities committed during the civil war (C5, 2012). Instead even today they urge victims to forgive and forget what happened. Consequently, they strongly oppose revealing the truth by digging up the past and thus foster a climate of impunity.

The need for safety and certain theological positions became interlaced to the extent that, even after the immediate threat had ceased, theological convictions that had promised safety during the civil war were maintained. Opting for forgiveness and impunity is a way of keeping the dangerous past away and fending off fear and shame.

Surprisingly though, many victims are ready to forgive. The central request they have is to know the truth about what happened and whom to forgive. This is a sign of hope for the perpetrators and the entire society and shows that revenge does not have to be the driving force in dealing with the past. However, it will be necessary to discuss how reconciliation can be fostered without taking advantage of the victims' generosity whilst leaving the underlying causes of the conflicts untouched.

To this day, many perpetrators remain powerful. The international community tried to support Guatemala's justice system so that it would ultimately be able to prosecute even highly influential individuals. This foreign intervention, however, still serves as a pretext for perpetrators and their allies to discredit the justice system as being a puppet of the international

community. Yet without including the perpetrators in a constructive reconciliation process, societal peace can hardly be achieved. One of the main questions that have not yet been attended to sufficiently in the literature is how to include the perpetrators and their allies into the process of reconciliation.

The church could have a special role within the reconciliation efforts as perpetrators and victims alike are generally attached to a church. Initiating a discussion in the church about the key issues of overcoming trauma could provide an example for wider societal reconciliation.

Taking into consideration the findings of chapters 1 and 2 it has become clear that Guatemala has to deal with individual and communal forms of trauma. The history of violence as well as the everyday brutality has an impact on individual victims, the perpetrators, and a society at large resulting in a traumatised community. Trauma recovery, therefore, requires a systemic approach that pays attention to all the different groups in Guatemalan society, to victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. As noted before, trauma is a process of a constantly changing interplay between the social environment and the psychological state of the individual (Becker, 2006, pp. 195-196). The case study on Guatemala showed the diverging interests and needs of the different groups in Guatemalan society. These interests and needs have to be clear in order to assess the possibility of the journey towards healing and reconciliation. Lederach and Lederach (2010) note that healing and reconciliation are "spaces of human interaction that have qualities of deepening and expanding" (p. 12). These spaces have a "*seed-like quality* that [are] simultaneously both birth and fruit" (ibid., p. 11, emphasis in original). Ultimately, the different groups will have to meet to transform the current situation of trauma, hatred, violence, and self-excuses into a reconciled community that allows space for healing.

The next chapter examines the needs of the different groups and presents approaches on how to define the connections between truth, forgiveness and reconciliation focusing on theological definitions. The interviews showed that, in a country with so many Christians, theological answers are needed and expected. C1 (2012) gave a glimpse of how the connections could be characterised by making a reference to Psalm 85:10: "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed" (NKJV).

Chapter 5 Reconciliation

The journey towards reconciliation is long and painful. It requires being prepared to listen to the enemy's narrative, to engage in a dialogue about identity, to think about the meaning that the enemy ascribes to the conflict, and to perceive the enemy's suffering and needs. This research intends to give support on this journey by helping Guatemalan churches and their leaders to revisit the topics of forgiveness and reconciliation on the background of a traumatised community, in order to assist their members in discerning between adequate and harmful ways of talking about forgiveness and reconciliation. At the same time the research is also directed at leaders of non-church organisations to encourage their critical engagement in the discussion about the importance of spirituality for traumatised people and helpers alike. It is hoped that both, churches and non-church organisations learn from each other for the wellbeing of the people they attend.

In this chapter an analysis of the previous chapters' findings regarding the different groups' needs is presented. If these needs are taken into consideration, the chance of successful mutual engagement in healing and reconciliation increases. The key groups, as mentioned before, are the victims, the perpetrators and the bystanders, though not everybody fits neatly into only one of these categories, as will be shown.

The second part of this chapter discusses some approaches to reconciliation focussing on the situation in Guatemala. This will lead to the final part of this chapter that discusses the consequences and significance of the previous findings.

5.1 Assessing the needs

Dividing Guatemalan society into three groups – victims, perpetrators, and bystanders – helps to clarify where each individual member of the group stands. It describes their position in the trauma cycle, being either at the beginning and therefore seeing oneself as a victim, or in the cycle's later stages, legitimising violence as a means to defend oneself. Bystanders attach themselves emotionally to one of these groups. These different groups are characterised by diverging interests and needs. This makes it difficult to understand the other's way of thinking and to agree on a path towards reconciliation. Clarified needs, however, give the opportunity to meet at a deeper level and to discover common humanity and shared needs.

As a working definition, a victim will be defined as a person who "is acted on and usually adversely affected by (...) an agent (...) as one that is injured [or] subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2013) and who defines him- or herself as a victim (Strobl, 2010). Perpetrators are hence defined as those who bring about the injury, oppression, hardship, or mistreatment. As described earlier, perpetrators can become victims and victims can become perpetrators.[270] Bystanders are defined as "witnesses who are part of the perpetrator group but have not been directly involved in violence" (Staub, 2006, p. 871). If they are "in a position to act, [they] have great potential to either facilitate or prevent the evolution of violence" (Staub, 2007, p. 347). There are, however, witnesses of the same ethnic group as the victims. These witnesses will be classified in this research as victims, because forcing people to witness gruesome events is often part of the perpetrator's strategy to intimidate and demoralise the targeted group.

5.1.1 Victims

As described by the interviewees, there are different groups of victims with differing interests and needs. The largest group of victims are indigenous people in Guatemala who suffered in particular from state inflicted violence which began with the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. As a result, the *conquista* became the chosen trauma for many of them. The trauma was passed on to every new generation.

The history of violence led to the deterioration of basic trust and security. Feelings of guilt, shame, fear and humiliation persist to this day. Especially during the internal armed conflict, communal values deteriorated when many communities dissolved and their members moved to the big cities in order to find security and a means of earning a living. What they found, however, were extremely harsh living conditions and violent surroundings. Most of those people who live in the poor areas of the big cities, the so called *asentamientos*, act in a survival mode, not being able to make long term choices. Secure family relations are broken and domestic violence is high in this environment of hopelessness. Thus, many suffer from chronic trauma with impaired affect regulation, self destructive and suicidal behaviour, and difficulties in relating to other people (cf. Maercker & Rosner, 2006, p. 8).

[270] Staub (2007) remarks: "People who have been victimized or in other ways traumatized often carry deep psychological wounds. They tend to feel vulnerable, have a diminished sense of self, distrust people and see people and the world as dangerous. When they experience new threat, they may feel the need to use force to defend themselves, thereby becoming perpetrators" (p. 343)

These reactions to traumatic events are elements of a cycle of trauma: century old mental representations are reactivated; for a long time there was no place for mourning so that the grief was passed on to later generations hoping that they could mourn and resolve what the victims themselves could not (cf. Volkan, 1997, p. 45); a “time collapse” and dualistic narratives (cf. Volkan, 1997, p. 35) emerged when the violence in the country was constantly compared with the wars during the Spanish invasion, thus, beliefs about others and the self were frozen (cf. Hicks, 2008, p. 142); a failure of compassion (cf. Fierke, 2004, p. 491) can be observed in Guatemalan society, where criminals easily kill their victims and where many people support the lynching of criminals. There is, however, no urge for “redemptive” violence in the indigenous community, aimed at destroying the social bonds and practices of other ethnic groups (i.e. *criollo* or *ladino*) (cf. Robben & Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 11). Instead the violence is usually directed towards the self and the family.

A second group of victims, in addition to the indigenous population, are the many supporters of social change in Guatemala who were persecuted and killed by the security forces: leaders of labour unions, university professors, church leaders and many other activists.

A third group of victims – one that overlaps, however, with the first and the second – are those who suffer from everyday violence. Kidnappings, armed assaults, and killings traumatise the surviving victims and produce an environment of fear and mistrust. People who are affected by this kind of violence belong mostly, but not exclusively, to the poorer indigenous and *ladino* part of the population. Members of all social classes have been hit by these traumatic events. As described in chapter 1, after individual trauma the victims lose their faith in life, in others, and in the self. Their former belief system has been shattered (cf. Stamm, 1999, p. 5). The violence inflicted by criminals is widespread so that its effects transcend the realm of the individual and their immediate social surroundings. Instead, the whole of society is in constant fear and many are calling for the “firm hand” that responds to violence with violence. Primarily non-indigenous people do not hesitate to call for a strong response from the state. Indigenous people, however, are less inclined to trust the security forces that in the past caused so much suffering.

A fourth group of victims are members of the security forces and members of the PAC. Some of them had been forced to commit atrocities, were systematically brutalised, and had to face losses inflicted by guerrilla fighters. Moreover, even just participating in acts of violence creates

trauma (Staub, 2006, p. 872). They start with devaluing the victims until the point where “killing the victims becomes the right thing to do” (ibid.). The group uses dualistic narratives by calling opponents “communists” or “members of the guerrilla forces”. Some of them see themselves as victims in a plot created by the international community to deprive them of their power and their rightful victory over the guerrilla army.

The needs of the different groups of victims differ in some respects while being the same in others. The indigenous people and the victims of criminal violence both have an urgent need for security. In addition, individuals from all groups may need psychological treatment. Within the group of victims of crime, there is a difference between victims who belong to the middle and upper classes and the victims among the poor people, especially those who live in the *asentamientos* in Guatemala City. While the victims of the middle and upper classes are able to sufficiently fulfil their basic needs, the poor people lack food, health care, education, secure family relations, etc. In addition to the violence inflicted by security forces and criminals, they suffer from structural violence, having almost no opportunity to escape from poverty. Consequently, they and the indigenous community at large need long-term development strategies, a social and political infrastructure that serves all people, a sound political system, and less corruption. Moreover, the poor need support in developing and increasing their capabilities which ultimately means respect for their human rights (cf. Nussbaum, 2007b, p. 21).

Additionally, indigenous people need to deal with the wounds caused by centuries of suffering (cf. Cyrulnik, 2009b, p. 258) in order to restore their identity, a process which could give strength and confidence (cf. Sen, 2006, p. 1). The first step towards the healing of the past would be the acknowledgment of their suffering by the perpetrators. This acknowledgement would need to include the honouring of the suffering and of the courage of many activists during the internal armed conflict. However, this has only been done reluctantly. The report of the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) was not officially accepted. Any attempt to search for the truth about murdered relatives is denounced as being an attitude of revenge. Furthermore, victims are called to forgive and forget and to refrain from demanding justice. Thus, time and space for grieving is reduced to the private realm. Yet, in many cases, the victim’s community has been severely damaged, as its members were either killed or dispersed into the anonymity of the city. The rebuilding of a new belief system has become complicated (cf. Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 80).

Churches could assist these victims in finding new meaning and providing a community of trust. Yet, knowledge among church leaders about how to cope with trauma is very limited. There is confusion about how to teach about forgiveness and congregations tend to load additional burdens on the victims. As mentioned in chapter 4, some churches pay no attention to the social environment and focus solely on individual salvation. Others mainly stress social issues but neglect the importance of a new belief system (e.g. relationship with God, spiritual growth). Growing attention has been given to a gospel of prosperity which promises their members great wealth in return for them giving generously to the church. As a result, the church leaders live in opulence without paying attention to the structural problems in the country. The dominant meaning of life, thus, consists of becoming rich. Meaning, therefore, does not rest on "what [someone] gives to the world in terms of his creation", "what [someone] takes from the world in terms of encounters and experiences", or what "stand [someone] takes when faced with a fate which he cannot change" (Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 179).

In contrast to many churches, mental health and human rights organisations are strong in the area of advocacy, although they are sometimes weak in fostering meaning and a new belief system when they neglect spiritual resources (cf. Frankl & Batthyány, 2010, p. 214).

Complexifying identities is also an important step towards coping with trauma. Indigenous people in Guatemala are often trapped in their strongly stratified society. Non-indigenous people are used to seeing the indigenous people as their servants. Identities are mostly classified in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of education and wealth. Indigenous people will therefore have to stop seeing themselves as being inferior to others. Non-indigenous people now need to emphasise their common humanity with the indigenous population who had been treated as inferior for centuries.

The group of victims among the security forces and the PAC also long for acknowledgment of their suffering. Yet, because they were part of an army that committed gross human rights violations, many try to block out the feeling of shame that comes along with the realisation of their guilt. As a consequence they try to justify their behaviour (cf. Marks, 2009).

5.1.2 Perpetrators

Looking at the history of Guatemala since the Spanish *conquista*, the security forces and their civilian commanders were the main groups of perpetrators. Indigenous people were merely

regarded as cheap labour with almost no rights. A social system was built that was based on the exploitation of large parts of the society. The wealthy population protected their special rights with the help of the military and the police. During the last century's internal armed conflict, many indigenous people were drawn into the conflict and many were forced to become members of the Civil Self-Defence Patrol (PAC). As a result, numerous indigenous people became perpetrators as well. The clear line between victims and perpetrators was blurred in many cases. In addition, the guerrilla groups, which consisted of members of all the different ethnic groups, kidnapped and killed thousands of their real or alleged opponents.

Another sizable group of perpetrators are the various sorts of criminals. The members of drug cartels protect their interests ruthlessly, killing their opponents brutally and infiltrating and bribing members of the government as well as the security forces. Youth gangs (*maras*) terrorise large parts of the cities and other criminals kidnap and kill indiscriminately.

The needs of the different groups of perpetrators vary significantly. If these needs are taken into consideration this increases the chance that they will be willing to become involved in processes of social healing. Perpetrators in governmental positions and security forces were highly influenced by the anti-communist rhetoric of the last century. The cold war had strong repercussions in Guatemala. Those who took part in the counterinsurgent efforts still justify their behaviour as being necessary to defend the country from communism. The members of the PAC, on the other hand, mostly had received only rudimentary education and often did not understand the wider reasons for the fighting. The army set the rules and the PAC obeyed, many times in extremely cruel ways. Having been given permission to commit atrocities, some PAC members used their power for personal gain and as a means for resolving conflicts within the community in their favour.

As noted above, the reaction of the perpetrators is to try to block out any feelings of shame and to legitimate their actions as an act of protecting the country and the status quo. The former guerrilla fighters equally justify their behaviour as an act of liberation of the suffering classes. All these perpetrators long for acknowledgment of their noble intentions and that the values they fought for were good and made an important contribution to their country, the ends justifying the means. Yet, in order to contribute to the process of coping with communal trauma, they would need a space "for choice and responsibility" (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 212) and for their

engagement into “meaningful conversation” (ibid., p. 213) with their opponents. In addition, in order to find relief for their conscience for the dreadful things they have done (cf. NC3, 2012), perpetrators might long for forgiveness from God and from their victims or victims’ families.

The needs of the criminal perpetrators are different. As some interviewees expressed, Guatemalan society is used to solving their conflicts by violence. Therefore, the society at large needs new role models who deal non-violently with conflicts. In addition, due to poverty and a lack of future prospects, many are drawn into criminal activities. Social stability, work opportunities and affordable secondary education are necessary. In addition, the monetary incentive for dealing with drugs, for example, is extremely high and the danger of being arrested is low. A functioning judicial and law enforcing system and the fight against corruption is necessary. Also, new drug policies could help to reduce the drug cartels’ activities (Caulkins & Lee, 2012).

5.1.3 Bystanders

The role of bystanders in conflicts can be crucial. Staub (2007) remarks that “witnesses who are in a position to act have great potential power to either facilitate or prevent the evolution of violence” (p. 347). Passivity is interpreted by the perpetrators and other bystanders as approval (ibid.). But as soon as bystanders “indicate by their words or deeds that action is needed (...) other people are more likely to act” (ibid.).

Those who qualify as bystanders in Guatemala mostly live in the country’s capital *Ciudad Guatemala*. The civil war seemed far away even though bomb attacks and politically motivated murders happened frequently. Inhabitants of the capital perceived the guerrilla groups with their Marxist ideology[271] as a threat to their way of life. Consequently, many of these bystanders backed the military’s campaign to destroy the guerrilla movement without caring to know the extent of the violence that raged in many parts of the country.

The psychological consequences of being a passive bystander are similar to the traumatising effects that the perpetrators suffer (Staub, 2006, p. 872). Many inhabitants of Guatemala City still believe that reports about the massacres during the internal armed conflict were made up by the guerrilla groups and its supporters, and are part of an international conspiracy. In order to

[271] Bornschein (2009) remarks that the second generation of guerrilla groups that emerged in 1975 had increasingly a Marxist ideology. It remains, however, unclear if the guerrilla-groups intended to fight for a revolution or social reforms (p. 51). Moreover, the guerrilla groups who later formed the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala* (URNG) had different ideas about the future shape of Guatemala (ibid., p. 195).

distance themselves from the victims, they accepted the justifications given by the perpetrators (cf. Staub, 2006, p. 872). C16 (2012) knew of students from middle and higher classes, who were children at the end of the internal armed conflict, who did not believe that there had been a war in the country. C16 comments: "The students said to me that here there was no war, it is not true, as nothing had happened to any of my family (...). But when we studied for example the REMHI or read the books from the commission for historical clarification many said, this is not true, because it was written by people from the left"[272].

In addition, C10 (2012) was convinced that the Guatemalan population was taught to be silent and to rebuke those who raise their voice against injustices: "When there is a group that tries to speak up, to raise their voice, people are always frightened, they get scared or they [i.e. people from the group that speaks up] are snubbed. You have to stay silent"[273]. As a result, bystanders tend intuitively to back those who are in power and often believe their view uncritically. C7 (2012) comments in a frustrated way that Guatemala's middle class solely cares about its own wellbeing and safety and is not interested in wider societal issues, in what happened during the war, its causes and its consequences. NC3 (2012) observed that people are not prepared to fight the status quo but rather hide in their homes from the violence, isolating themselves from others. NC3 concludes: "This is beneficial for those in power because then there won't be a collective action that forces the state to change things that are not working"[274]. Consequently, bystanders mostly remain passive.

On the other hand, as described earlier, numerous organisations and individuals were prepared to take risks and to defend the victims and speak up for the poor. They provided psychological and spiritual support, publicly denounced human rights violations and were active in finding evidence of atrocities. They have become active bystanders and continue with their efforts even today.

Even though C7 (2012) is furious about the capital's middle and higher classes' self-centredness and their attitude of protecting their possessions[275], safety is one of the bystander's

[272] "los alumnos me decían a mi aquí no hubo guerra, eso no es cierto, si a ninguno de mi familia le pasó nada (...) Pero cuando nosotros estudiábamos por ejemplo el REMHI o leíamos los libros de la comisión de esclarecimiento histórico muchos me decían, esto no es cierto, porque está escrito por gente de la izquierda":
[273] "Entonces cuando hay un grupo que está tratando de hablar y de levantar la voz, siempre la gente se asusta, tiene miedo o se les reprime. Hay que seguir callados".
[274] "es bien beneficioso para el poder porque entonces nunca hay una acción colectiva que obligue al estado a cambiar cosas que no funcionan".
[275] C7 comments on the population from the capital who are seemingly not interested in the past of the 2012 elected ex-military Otto Pérez Molina: "The people from the capital are idiots because the only thing they can think of is: 'I don't

primary needs. If safety is lacking, passive bystanders will most likely be more interested in self-preservation than in advocating against violence and injustices suffered by others. In a safe environment, however, people are more willing to engage in seeing the wider picture. For Staub (2006) this is important to achieve healing.

In order to broaden the bystanders' view of the events in a conflict, Staub suggests giving special honour to those who stood up against the perpetrators, especially those who belong to the same ethnic group or class as the perpetrator (ibid., p. 877). This could help demonstrate that not all non-indigenous people supported the war and not all indigenous people were *guerrilleros*. In addition, it could be helpful to listen to the stories of victims who have not been affected directly by the bystanders' passivity. As a consequence the bystanders would have none of the reactions of shame that would block out empathy for the suffering of others. Otherwise, the bystanders' defence "against guilt and shame", as Staub observes, "[would make] (...) it difficult for them to engage with the painful effects of their own or their group's actions" (ibid, p. 876).

Victims, perpetrators, and bystanders long for safety, good living conditions, intact relationships, and acknowledgment of their respective situations: their pain, their efforts in fighting for peace, their fear and their concern for their own well being. It is this "common humanity" that is most important and that is a common denominator in the needs of all three groups. Yet, it is extremely challenging to grant these human rights to the enemy and to see the other as a fellow human being. On this path towards healing and reconciliation each group and each individual has his or her specific way to go.

5.2 Approaches to reconciliation in Guatemala

5.2.1 Healing, social healing and reconciliation

Lederach and Lederach (2010) believe that, at its core, healing is an individual experience. It is "always a journey faced by and unfolding before the individual. A person heals" (p. 203). Healing, though, is not unidirectional but multidirectional consisting of "journeys" that require "more than one movement", movements that "are repeated over and again as part of a continuous process of health" (ibid., p. 204).

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want my car to get stolen, I don't want my cell phone to get stolen.' They are more interested in their car or cell phone than in what this man did." ("a gente de la capital es idiota porque lo único que piensan es: 'ay qué no me roben mi carro, qué no me roben mi celular.' Les importa más el carro y el celular que lo que hizo ese hombre.")

Yet, as Lederach and Lederach point out, “individual healing (...) is enhanced – and perhaps can only be understood – by locating it within the context of the collective” (ibid., p. 203). There is an “intimate link between the individual and the collective” (ibid.). Social healing and reconciliation are crucial if the individual is to recover from traumatic experiences. Lederach and Lederach define the term “*social healing*, as an intermediary phenomenon located between micro-individual healing and wider collective reconciliation” (ibid., p. 6, emphasis in original). Paula Green (2009) thinks that the concept of social healing and not reconciliation is the most suitable concept in the direct aftermath of widespread violence (p. 77). Social healing “asks only that postwar communities begin the process of restoring relations so that they can coexist, make decisions together and rebuild their commons” (ibid.). Social healing entails the coping measures that were presented earlier (chapter 3): dealing with difficult life conditions, healing past wounds, and complexifying identities (cf. Green, 2009, p. 77). Reconciliation on the other hand “may be years or decades in the making, more demanding than many victims can mange early in their recovery process, and counter-productive if pushed on societies too quickly by outsiders” (ibid.).

Yet reconciliation is needed at some stage and is regarded as the desired outcome of the healing efforts (Green, 2009, p. 79; Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 7). There are numerous approaches to describe how reconciliation can be achieved. The literature about this topic is extensive and its definition varies greatly. One reason for the many definitions, as Lederach and Lederach suggest, could be the development of the use of the word reconciliation from “the territory of religious concern” towards an increasingly “political category” (2010, p. 3). Definitions range from a “thinner” conception with reconciliation defined as simple co-existence (Crocker, 1999, p. 60) and as “synonymous with some form of enmity accommodation, a coexistence necessary to control the bitterness of entrenched divisions” (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 3) to a “thicker” (Crocker, 1999, p. 60) conception, defining reconciliation as a task too difficult to achieve which, besides seeking healing of memories and forgiveness, ultimately aims at changing “structures in society that provoked, promoted, and sustained violence” (Schreiter, 1992, p. 1). Hence, this “thicker” conception understands reconciliation as “an intensely sought but elusive goal” (ibid.).

Regardless of the thinner or thicker concept of definition, Gruchy (2002) asks: “Who (...) are we who dare to speak about reconciliation?” (p. 16). Are we not dealing with events that are

unspeakable? There is a danger in speaking about reconciliation and “sometimes silence can express our concern even better than words” (ibid., p. 17). At the same time, however, “we dare not remain silent” (ibid.) but have to foster the hope that there can be life beyond hatred and violence. There are more options than just forgetting the past (Crocker, 1999, p. 45) and thus leaving the victims with the burden of deeply disturbing memories.

In the following I will discuss aspects of reconciliation within the Guatemalan context by presenting some key ideas from several experts in the field of reconciliation. This will then lead to the question of how the churches in Guatemala could contribute to a wider national reconciliation between the different groups – victims, perpetrators and bystanders.

5.2.2 On the way towards reconciliation in Guatemala

5.2.2.1 Desmond Tutu

The Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of the most outspoken critics of South African apartheid. As Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa he contributed significantly to the peaceful transition to democracy in his country. He was widely recognised, and at the same time strongly criticised, by many for his approach on reconciliation based on restorative justice and forgiveness , as he mentions in his foreword to the TRC report (1998, p. 8). Tutu’s main concern was to achieve a peaceful transition to a new society and to acknowledge the suffering of the victims. He repeatedly mentioned that South Africa was on the brink of civil war (1999, p. 25). Tutu (1999) remarks: “We have had to balance the requirements of justice, accountability, stability, peace, and reconciliation” (p. 27). Caring for the victims therefore meant to abandon retributive justice that would only have resulted in a “Pyrrhic victory” with “South Africa lying in ashes” (ibid.). Instead, the justice process was turned around: the perpetrator could obtain amnesty after a complete disclosure of his offences. This, however, meant granting impunity to the perpetrator under certain circumstances. Tutu is convinced that this was the only way under the given circumstances to deal adequately with the truth (ibid., p. 31).

The South African context has similarities to the situation in Guatemala. First, an ethnic group which formed the majority of the country was discriminated against and mistreated severely and now has to live side by side with the perpetrators while struggling with the questions of truth and justice. Second, churches were involved in backing or at least not condemning violence and

oppression (ibid., p. 145). There are certainly remarkable exceptions, among which Desmond Tutu and the Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi are the most prominent and influential figures who stood up and fought against racism and violence. Third, to this day both countries suffer from high rates of criminality.

Yet while the Truth and Reconciliation Commission prompted many perpetrators to disclose their crimes in order to apply for amnesty, in Guatemala most perpetrators could keep silence, supported by an amnesty agreement between the warring parties for all war related crimes (except for crimes against humanity). Consequently, forensic evidence of the crimes committed by the military is found only gradually due to the tireless work of non-governmental organisations and increasingly of the public prosecutor's office (*ministerio público*, MP*)*.

Just as in South Africa, where many members of the apartheid government argue that it is time to "let bygones be bygones" (Tutu, 1998, p. 7), members of the Guatemalan security forces and the government denounce, as an act of revenge, every attempt to reveal the truth. Tutu (1999) remarks: "the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, is embarrassingly persistent, and will return and haunt us unless it has been dealt with adequately" (p. 31). He believes that "the wounds of the past must not be allowed to fester. They must be opened. They must be cleansed. And balm must be poured on them so they can heal" (Tutu, 1998, p. 7).The Guatemalans have not yet agreed on a common history and there is much debate about the past. Tutu is convinced that historical amnesia victimises the victims again, by "denying their experience, a vital part of their identity" (1999, p. 32) and that "it is only by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future" (1998, p. 7).

In the discussion about amnesty and impunity Tutu draws attention to the concept of *ubuntu*[276], which emphasises the common humanity of all humans. For Tutu (1999) the victim's and perpetrator's humanity is intertwined (p. 35). He believes that "in the process of dehumanising another, in inflicting untold harm and suffering, the perpetrator was inexorably being dehumanised as well" (ibid.). *Ubuntu*, however, is at work, where the common humanity is being restored (ibid., p. 36). It entails restorative justice, "the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships" (ibid., p. 51). Out of this world-view, many

[276] Tutu (1999) explains that *ubuntu* has its origin in the Nguni group of languages and "speaks of the very essence of being human" (p. 35). Someone who is said to have *ubuntu* is "generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate (...). It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people'. It is not 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather: 'I am human because I belong'" (ibid.).

victims chose to forgive their tormentors. Tutu comments: “Forgiveness gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanise them” (ibid., p. 35). At the same time, the perpetrator takes responsibility for his or her action.

The amnesty in Guatemala made it extremely difficult to deal with the past. The amnesty released the perpetrators from taking responsibility for their actions. From the outset, dealing with the past was a struggle between the perpetrators’ denial of responsibility and the search for truth and justice. Still, there was always an outstretched hand from many victims, who wanted to know the truth but were simultaneously prepared to forgive. The generosity of the victims seen on many occasions during the processes of the TRC in South Africa[277] could have been experienced in Guatemala as well. A South African victim exclaimed: “We do want to forgive, but we don’t know whom to forgive” (ibid., p. 115). This very same feeling was shared by many Guatemalan victims. However, most perpetrators reject any responsibility, keep silence about their crimes, and even blame the victims on occasion. Forgiveness has become a tool to acquiesce the victims instead of becoming an opportunity for the victims to be an example for acting with magnanimity and for the perpetrators to take responsibility. When perpetrators dehumanise their victims and themselves they contribute to a society where the concept of common humanity is suppressed. The unresolved past finds its continuation in the dehumanising violence of today’s high rates of criminality.

The hearings during the sessions of the TRC displayed how cruel human beings could become. It was vital for Tutu to deal theologically with these experiences and “to distinguish between perpetrator and deed, between the sinner and the sin: to hate and condemn the sin whilst being filled with compassion for the sinner” (ibid., pp. 73-74). Tutu is convinced that we ought not to “give up anyone, because our God was one who had a particularly soft spot for sinners” (ibid., p. 74). He remarks that “each of us has the capacity for the most awful evil” and that it is “but for the grace of God” that he is where he is (ibid., p. 76).

This self critical theology stands in contrast to a theology that defended apartheid (ibid., p. 145) and to a theology that does not care for those who suffer from political oppression or poverty, like in Guatemala. As shown in the interviews, Guatemalan churches, with outstanding exceptions, had difficulties in developing adequate theological positions during the internal

[277] Tutu (1998) reports: “On the whole we have been exhilarated by the magnanimity of those who should by rights be consumed by bitterness and a lust for revenge; who instead have time after time shown an astonishing magnanimity and willingness to forgive” (p. 18).

armed conflict. Even today the theological emphasis of many churches lies with personal salvation and individual wealth. Forgiveness and reconciliation are frequently regarded as belonging only to the personal inner realm and as having no influence over shaping Guatemalan society. For Tutu a theology of forgiveness and reconciliation between enemies is the basis for a new beginning (ibid., p. 76). Without them, there is no future (ibid., p. 209).

Desmond Tutu's approach to reconciliation can be summarised in his efforts to restore *ubuntu*, the common humanity. Based on his theology of God's self-giving reconciliatory work, he suggests promoting restorative justice, in which perpetrators take responsibility, injustices are dealt with, and relations are restored through forgiveness. For the Guatemalan context the combination of responsibility and forgiveness on the basis of a common humanity could help the different parties to leave their positions and to think of new creative ways of relating to each other.

5.2.2.2 Miroslav Volf

Born in Croatia (at that time a part of Yugoslavia), Volf is currently professor of theology at Yale University Divinity School. His scientific approaches were strongly influenced by the war in his native country and the question of how it is possible to live together again after the war. Christian-Muslim relations are of special interest to him as well as questions about reconciliation, forgiveness, and memory. In his seminal work "Exclusion and Embrace" (Volf, 1996) he emphasises the need to identify exclusionary attitudes within a society and to find ways to reconcile estranged people.

Volf is convinced that the basis for reconciliation is to reach out to the enemy. This difficult task, however, is exacerbated by the strong boundaries that cultures set up to ensure that a community or society is as homogenous as possible and therefore that an individual's identity is given less importance. This could either happen through blunt exclusion of everyone who is or appears to be different[278]. Or it could happen through – mostly well meant – efforts of inclusion. Volf (1996) argues: "A consistent drive toward inclusion seeks to level all the boundaries that divide and to neutralize all outside powers that form and shape the self" (p. 63).

[278] For Volf one of the most powerful metaphors for exclusion is the term "ethnic cleansing" (1996, p. 57). Volf points out that "Jesus condemned the world of exclusion – a world in which the innocent are labeled evil and driven out and a world in which the guilty are not sought out and brought into communion" (ibid., pp. 73-74).

In Guatemala both ways of erecting boundaries have been used. Over the centuries indigenous people have been marginalised and excluded. To this day, subliminal as well as open forms of racism persist in Guatemala. On the other hand, there have been strong efforts of "ladinisation"[279] by different governments, especially during the 19th century (Sotomayor, 2009, p. 183). The aim was to build a society without an indigenous population and reduce the ethnic diversity in the country. In the 20th century major emphasis was put on "integration", valuing the differences yet at the same time trying to reduce these differences and to build a "Guatemalan identity" (ibid., p. 186).

As could be seen in the case of Rwanda, the seemingly good intention to develop a common national identity in order to curtail tribalism can be used as a way of exclusion of power for certain ethnic groups. Inclusion can thus become an instrument of oppression (Lemarchand, 2009, p. 415; Reyntjens, 2004, p. 187). Identity formation, however, is important for coping with trauma and dealing with the wounds of the past. As described in the case study on Guatemala, many indigenous people feel inferior to other members of the society and many young people in the cities try to hide their origin.

In order to reconcile and to reach out to the enemy, Volf believes that repentance and forgiveness are necessary (1996, p. 100). He remarks, that reconciliation entails the support of the oppressed for the victims and the call for radical change to be made by the oppressors, grounded on God's unconditional love (ibid., p. 112). If repentance is genuine, it must lead to an abundant restitution, seeking to offset the consequences of the violation (ibid., p. 118)[280].

For Volf, however, the need for repentance is linked to the non-innocence of all human beings who as victims "all too often (...) mimic the behavior of the oppressors" and are tempted by "the desire to excuse their own reactive behaviour either by claiming that they are not responsible for it or that such reactions are a necessary condition of liberation" (ibid., p. 117). However, God does not treat them like all other human beings but is partial to the needy, watches over and upholds them in a way he does not do with the powerful (ibid.)[281].

[279] Jonas (1991a) explains that "ladinisation" is a form of cultural assimilation. The proponents of this concept hope that "the 'backward' Indian would disappear as the result of contact with the 'modern' or civilized ladino world" (p. 104).
[280] As a practical example, Volf refers to the story of Zachaeus (Luke 19:1-10).
[281] In his essay on "Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Justice" Volf (2001) remarks that "the struggle against injustice is inscribed in the very character of Christian faith" (p. 36). However, if the striving for justice is separated from the concept of grace and "the obligation of non-violence", Christian faith is in danger of being misused "by religiously legitimized violence" (ibid.).

Forgiveness has been discussed extensively in Guatemala and the Guatemalan governments publicly asked for forgiveness[282] even though forgiveness is genuinely interpersonal. Yet signs of repentance are meagre (Morales, 2013). Self-justifying attitudes prevail and the victims have to live side by side with their non-repenting tormentors. In this context it seems to be inappropriate to emphasise the "non-innocence" of all human beings. However, without wanting to minimise the suffering of so many victims, the atrocities committed by the PAC demonstrate that indigenous people who suffered for centuries under their rulers also became victimisers and fell into "the behavior of the oppressors" (Volf, 1996, p. 117). In addition, the overall climate of impunity and violence has become a pattern of Guatemalan society. Many young people, who are children of those who have been deeply traumatised by the civil war, are dragged into criminal activities and are subsequently despised by the wider society.

Repentance is one of the most difficult tasks and regarded in the Christian tradition as something that surpasses human capabilities and has to be given by God (ibid., p. 119). Volf observes that too often "we admit wrongdoing, justify ourselves, and attack, all in one breath" (ibid.). However, if this difficult step is taken, then "we have travelled a good distance on the road to reconciliation" (ibid., p. 120).

Besides repentance, forgiveness is Volf's second major category for reconciliation. Volf observes that "both, victim and perpetrator are imprisoned in the automatism of mutual exclusion, unable to forgive or repent and united in a perverse communion of mutual hate" (ibid.). The only way out of this predicament is to forgive and to break "the power of the remembered past" and thus to make "the spiral of vengeance grind to a halt" (ibid., p. 121).

Forgiveness, however, is not acting "as if nothing happened". Instead, forgiveness entails naming the evil deeds and reproaching those who committed them (Volf, 2001, p. 37). Consequently, "forgiveness always entails blame" (ibid., p. 45). The truth has to be revealed so that the insult of a hidden truth will not be an additional burden for the victims (1996, p. 234). Without memory the perpetrator's deeds will be washed off of his or her hands and future

[282] The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (*Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos,* CIDH) in 2009 sentenced Guatemala to publicly take responsibility for having denied justice to the victims in the aftermath of the internal armed conflict. Therefore, on various occasions president Álvaro Colom asked his country for forgiveness (Gámez, 2011a, 2011b). In its supervisory session in 2012 the CIDH acknowledged these public apologies, remarking that the victims who were present on these occasions appreciated them greatly (CIDH, 2012, p. 3). However, large parts of the sentence were not yet fulfilled, such as: the efforts to prosecute the intellectual authors of massacres were insufficient; the capacity to build on human rights issues within government institutions was missing; medical and psychological treatment of victims was insufficient; the government failed to set up a web page that would help to find abducted children (ibid., pp. 9-10).

perpetrators are tempted by thoughts of impunity (ibid.). Volf concludes that “as we remember Christ’s suffering, we are reminded to remember the sufferings of his brothers and sisters for whom he died” (ibid., p. 235).

Yet, even if the perpetrator takes responsibility, the victim who forgives knows that full justice has not been done. Volf (2001) remarks that “if justice were fully done, forgiveness would not be necessary (...) justice itself would have fully repaid for the wrongdoing” (p. 46). Consequently,

> “by forgiving we affirm the claims of justice in the very act of not letting them count against the one whom we forgive. By stating that the claims of justice need not be (fully) satisfied, the person who forgives indirectly underscores the fact that what the sense of justice claims to be a wrongdoing is indeed a wrongdoing.” (ibid.).

This part of forgiveness that makes space in the self is unconditional. Admitting the wrong and repentance are its possible results completing forgiveness. Yet the absence of repentance, as Volf remarks, “[amounts] to a refusal to see oneself as guilty and therefore a refusal to receive forgiveness as forgiveness” (ibid., p. 47). Hence, the wrongdoer remains unforgiven (ibid.).

The model of forgiveness can be seen in Jesus’ passion. His dying on the cross shows that he, the victim,

> “refuses to be defined by the perpetrator, forgives and makes space in himself for the enemy. Hence precisely as a victim Christ is the true judge: by offering to embrace the offenders he judges both, the initial wrongdoing of the perpetrators and the reactive wrongdoing of many victims” (Volf, 1996, p. 127).

In the Eucharist followers of Christ celebrate the idea that he made space in himself for us and that he invites us in. Volf notes however, that we can only be the recipients of this grace of God if we are willing to be made into its agents: “what happens to us must be done by us” (ibid., p. 129). It is now our turn, to make “space for others in ourselves and invite them in – even our enemies” (ibid.).

One of the main problems in Guatemala is that victims are called to forgive without full disclosure of what happened. Following Volf this would mean, even if the victims would forgive, the perpetrators would remain unforgiven, as they do not accept the blame and are not willing to take responsibility. Moreover, concealing the truth gives rise to a climate of impunity with high

rates of criminality. By officially not accepting the results of the CEH, the warring parties set the standard of how to deal with the ugly past. Many churches also propose the idea to forget quickly, releasing the perpetrators into impunity. As mentioned before, many Guatemalan victims are prepared to forgive and to make space in themselves for others, simultaneously inviting the other to reveal the truth and to show signs of repentance.

Volf's approach emphasises the importance of reconciliation as embrace: opening their arms for the other, forgiving, and making space for the other; then, waiting for repentance. The perpetrator will have to drop his weapon and sometimes the weapon will have to be taken from him before such an embrace is possible (ibid., p. 146). The movement of embrace does not end with this step; it is circular and starts once again (ibid., p. 145). For the Guatemalan context this approach helps to inform the discussion about forgiveness, truth and justice. It could prevent the victims from being accused of seeking revenge. Moreover, it could help the churches to broaden their understanding of repentance and forgiveness beyond the personal inner realm.

5.2.2.3 John Howard Yoder

The ethicist and pacifist John Howard Yoder is one of the most prominent Mennonite theologians of the 20th century. Yoder interprets the history of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, as an example of how to overcome barriers between enemies in a nonviolent way (1994, 2001). He argues that Jesus' main intention was to lead to a new communion of love, to a restored community, and thus he opposed the system of social oppression and enmity. Yoder (1994) points out that "Jesus was not just a moralist whose teachings had some political implications" (p. 52) and that "he was not primarily a teacher of spirituality whose public ministry unfortunately was seen in a political light" (ibid.). Instead, he was "the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships" (ibid.). Yoder (2001) is convinced that Jesus' proclamation of the beginning of the "acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:19; ASV, 2011) was a reference to the jubilee year (Lev 25)[283] and was meant to become true in the form of economic and personal well being (p. 25). This view, however, was opposed by the leading parties who ultimately nailed him to the cross.

His followers are called to act as he acted, i.e. restoring relationships and communities, standing up against oppressive and violent systems, and taking care of the weak (cf. Lk 4:19;

[283] The rules of the jubilee year, which occurs every 50 years, consist of "leaving the soil fallow", "the remission of debts", "the liberation of slaves", and "the return to each individual of his family's property" (J. H. Yoder, 1994, p. 60).

Mt 18:18; Jn 20:21). By bearing their cross (Lk 14:27) Jesus' followers emulate his way of dealing with an unreconciled and repressive environment (1994, p. 35), however, not in a legalistic way (2000, p. 74). Jesus refuses to use political power and does not choose the way of the revolutionary Zealots. He declines the kingship offered to him. Instead, he chooses the cross as an act of nonviolent resistance that showed its victory in the resurrection (1994).

Hess (2009) describes Yoder's interpretation of the cross as "a political alternative to insurrection because it reveals Jesus' refusal to conquer his enemies with force. It offers a political alternative to quietism because it directly confronts the authorities who ultimately kill him" (p. 14). Yoder (1994) is convinced that Jesus' aim to reconcile all things can only be achieved through a "suffering servanthood" to which the church is called to join (p. 123). The church is called to engage in processes of restoration and forgiveness as the costly way towards reconciliation and restoring communion (2001).

In order to restore communion, Yoder (2001) highlights the "rule of Christ" (Mt 18:15-20) as a way in which the church should deal with conflicts and sinful behaviour. The aim is not to punish but to restore the relationship. This concept has led to the development of the restorative justice approach used in many countries within the legal system (cf. Zehr, 2005)[284].

In addition to the rule of Christ, Yoder regards the Eucharist as the centre of the church's actions, as the place where the members of the church share their possessions. Yoder remarks that sharing the meal is a form of economic sharing (2001, p. 20) not only as a symbolic solidarity but as a reality that could even guide political agendas (ibid., p. 27). Hence, the adequate way to describe the Eucharist is in terms of economic ethics (ibid., p. 20). It reaches beyond the church as part of the renewal of the world (ibid., p. 21) and is thus a sign of the arrival of the messianic era (ibid., p. 22).

As a subsequent step on the way towards a restored communion, Yoder emphasises the role of baptism as the basis for overcoming separation and enmity (ibid., p. 28). Baptism establishes new unity and bridges the differences that have separated humanity (ibid., p. 30). The history and culture of different people come together into a new humanity in an "ethnic pluralism" (ibid., p. 31). Through faith in Jesus Christ, the creation is new (cf. 2 Cor 5:17) and ethnic

[284] The key aspects of restorative justice are (1) "crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationship" (Zehr & Mika, 1997, p. 1); (2) "violations create obligations and liabilities" (ibid.); (3) "restorative justice seeks to heal and put right the wrongs" (ibid.).

discrimination cannot persist any longer (cf. 2 Cor 5:16) (2001, p. 31). Baptism proclaims that the new community is characterised by the equality of all its members without one group dominating the other (ibid., p. 34), and by its absolute voluntariness (ibid., p. 43). In addition it means that through baptism, the old life can be left behind and the beginning of a new life is possible (ibid.).

Even though Yoder's approach was meant to inspire the whole of society, its focus lies on opening new perspectives to the church. Just as in many countries with a large Christian population, there are numerous different churches in Guatemala with widely differing views on the fundamentals of Christian faith as well as on the church's role within society. Yoder's approach towards reconciliation challenges the churches to take responsibility for their political role within society. Taking up one's cross would mean to oppose violence as well as being a silent bystander. The church would have had to oppose Rios Montt when he was wielding the bible in one hand and the rifle in the other. During the internal armed conflict, Christians belonged to both sides of the warring parties. Yoder is convinced that the way of Jesus has to be completely non-violent. Instead, the church should take the way of the cross, raising their prophetic voice, defending the weak and ultimately being prepared to suffer for their convictions. To this day, violence is an accepted method for Guatemalan Christians to solve problems. In addition, many churches preferred to be silent during the internal armed conflict and to continue church-life as if nothing was happening. Numerous churches regard social and peace work as something that does not belong to the church's role.

However, there have been many Christians in Guatemala who risked and lost their lives in their efforts to stand up against violence and injustice. Yoder's approach could help many churches to become a strong voice for the poor and to become an example for non-violent conflict transformation as well as an example for a communion where all ethnic groups live together in peace without discrimination and racism. As a result, the church could lose the support it has from political and social leaders and could be in danger of being persecuted by organised crime groups when refusing to collaborate. Yet, Yoder is convinced that this suffering servanthood is the core of the gospel, of the good news, that it is Jesus' way.

5.2.2.4 Robert Schreiter

Robert Schreiter, a catholic priest and professor of theology at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, is a recognised expert on the topic of reconciliation. Schreiter is especially interested in the role of the church within the reconciliation process and highlights the resources that faith in Christ can give. Even though the church has not always been in the forefront when supporting reconciliation efforts, Schreiter (1992) is convinced that the church has to deal with this question, since in many countries "the fault line of violence runs right through the church itself" (p. 13).

The fact that many churches and church members do not see that they have done anything wrong poses a major problem, hence "reconciliation is not even an issue" (ibid., p. 16). If, however, the need for reconciliation is acknowledged, people are tempted to proclaim peace hastily (ibid., p. 19) fearing that when dealing with the past new violence could ensue (ibid., p. 21). Schreiter, however, stresses that "while many hope for reconciliation, there are really only certain people who have the moral authority to issue the call for peace" (ibid., p. 20). These people mostly come from the group that have suffered the most (ibid.).

Before reconciliation could happen, liberation is necessary. Instead of a hasty peace, it is vital to remove the "conditions for continuing or reappearing" of violence (ibid., p. 22). Therefore, Schreiter calls Christians to hold a conflictive view that "acknowledges sin and evil in the world and participates in the process of overcoming it" (ibid., p. 25) instead of merely emphasising harmony and the "harmonization of conflicting interests (ibid., p. 23).

Churches in Guatemala differ widely in their view of the past. Those churches who acted as bystanders, sympathising with the government and the military, often demand quick forgiveness and reconciliation. In addition, some churches refuse to engage in social activities that would support the development of underprivileged groups in Guatemala. On the other hand, churches that were working actively against the oppressive regime focus more on truth, reparation and restitution.

Consequently, Guatemala is deeply divided on the question of how reconciliation should happen and at what pace. While some demand deep changes in society in order to overcome the oppression of the poor, others wish more or less to keep the status quo of economic privileges. Even some churches, whose members are predominantly poor, do not confront the

injustices they face but regard their fate as God's will that should not be changed. Thus, numerous churches become bystanders supporting a system in which large parts of the country live in extreme poverty. They do not appreciate their role in promoting violence and thus indirectly opposing reconciliation.

Schreiter remarks that violence is an "erosion of meaning", interrupting and destructing "fundamental senses of safety and selfhood without which we cannot survive as individuals and as societies" (ibid., p. 33). Narratives which give meaning are therefore vital for an individual and a society to survive (ibid., p. 34). However, oppressive systems often use narratives that are intended to hide the truth. Schreiter calls them "narratives of the lie" (ibid.). Not accepting these narratives "means resisting the breakdown of our own narratives" (ibid., p. 35) and keeping the memory of the things that happened alive (ibid.).

Attempts to hide the truth have been numerous in Guatemala. In many cases the victims were confronted by a wall of silence. It was only with the forensic scientists' support that the truth came out gradually. In this way, many mass graves were found on military ground. The narrative of the military emphasises that the so called counterinsurgent activities were necessary to protect the country from communism and that ultimately the means were justified by the ends (cf. Escribá Pimentel, 2009). Also the guerrilla movement – though on a much smaller scale – justified their armed struggle by declaring that there was no choice other than to use violence (cf. Sotomayor, 2009). Those, however, who oppose these narratives, are regarded as enemies. Countless opponents, "collaborators with the enemy", and whistle-blowers have been murdered during the internal armed conflict to give an example to others.

In order to fight the narrative of the lie, memory has to be reconstructed and a new narrative built. Yet it takes time to loose "the tentacles of the lie" that reach deeply into the memory of an individual or a society (Schreiter, 1992, p. 38). Schreiter is convinced that it is crucial to connect one's own narrative with a larger narrative (ibid., p. 39). The bible offers this larger narrative into which one's own narrative can be placed (Schreiter, 2011). Schreiter (1992) divides the Christian approach to reconciliation into three main areas: God reconciling through Christ, reconciling Jews and Gentiles, and the cosmic reconciliation of all things through Christ (p. 42).

Schreiter (1992) concludes that reconciliation is initiated by God (p. 43; cf. Schreiter, 2011) and begins with the healing of the victim (ibid., p. 68). He remarks that "the magnitude of the

damage is such that the implications of what has happened and what will be needed to overcome the suffering endured are beyond the reach of human comprehension" (2010, p. 370). Victims who experience God's healing are able to "work healing on the oppressors, offering the forgiveness that sparks repentance" (1992, p. 68). The victim who experienced God's grace becomes an "agent of reconciliation" himself or herself (ibid., p. 59). Those who interpret their own life in the light of this reconciliation begin to act differently and regard reconciliation more as a "way of life" than as a set of techniques (ibid., p. 60). As a consequence, forgiveness is given freely and even preceding the offender's repentance, not as "something to be earned" but as something given after having discovered the "graciousness of God" (ibid.). Both victim and oppressor can then become a new creation, which is more than "righting the wrongs and repenting of evildoing" (ibid.). However, Schreiter is convinced that "practices of conversion, remorse, and acts of expiation through punishment or ritual separation from the community will have to be undertaken if the perpetrator's humanity and membership in the human family are to be restored" (2010, p. 372). Reconciliation can then be a process of "coming to terms with the otherness and the alienation" of the enemy (1992, p. 62), just as Jews and Gentiles were called to become "a new humanity" (cf. Eph 2:15) (ibid., p. 55).

Finally, Schreiter emphasises the cosmic dimension of evil on the one hand and the necessity of cosmic reconciliation on the other (ibid., p. 58). Reconciliation can therefore only be God's work, "to which we are invited" (ibid., p. 59) and will not be complete until Christ's parousia (2011).

These considerations lead Schreiter to determining the role of the church in the reconciliation process. He points out that the church has to assess its own role in the conflict. If the church had been supportive of oppression or had watered down the concept of reconciliation by leaving "oppressive structures untouched" (1992, p. 65) it is most likely that the church would not be welcomed by the victims in the process of reconciliation (ibid., p. 67). It could be necessary to start a reconciliation process within the church and with the people "it did not choose to heed" (ibid., p. 68)[285] before attending to the problems of the wider community (ibid.). However the church, when invited in by the victims, can provide a valuable contribution to the reconciliation

[285] Schreiter (1992) mentions the United Church of Canada apologising to the native peoples of Canada and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland admitting their failings to the Jewish community (p. 68). Other examples could be added such as the South African Dutch Reformed Church's confession and apologies for its role in the apartheid era (General Synodal Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), 1997; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 1999).

process (ibid., p. 68). A church with a sense of its own sinfulness and its own limitations, has a place in the process of reconciliation (ibid., p. 69).

As mentioned before, Guatemalan churches have a mixed record in assessing their own role in the history of Guatemala. While the Roman Catholic Church sided with the oppressive ruling class for much of Guatemalan history, this church later became a reliable advocate for indigenous people. Many protestant churches on the other hand, have not accepted responsibility for their failure to help the poor and oppressed in the country. Many churches are not aware of their own sinfulness. A process of repentance has not yet begun. Attention is given only to parts of the biblical narrative on reconciliation leaving core elements aside. Some do not take responsibility for communal development; others do not provide enough spiritual guidance for the deepening of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Schreiter's approach is especially helpful to remind the church of its mandate to be part of God's work in reconciling the world by opposing narratives of the lie and promoting the biblical grand narrative. Such grand narrative encourages the church to stop being passive bystanders and become active in caring for the "little ones" (cf. Mt 18).

5.2.2.5 John Paul Lederach

The Mennonite, John Paul Lederach, is professor for international peacebuilding at Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Notre Dame University, and a Distinguished Scholar at the Eastern Mennonite University. He has extensive experience in mediation and consulting in areas of protracted conflicts all over the world. He is a renowned author of many books and numerous articles.

Lederach (1999, 2005; Lederach & Lederach, 2010) describes reconciliation as journeys, in the plural form, which emphasises that there is more than just one movement (2010, p. 204). These journeys entail "an encounter and a place" (1999, p. 26), which means "turning toward people who have contributed to our pain" (ibid., p. 24). Lederach calls this an "outward journey" (2010, p. 204). The inward journey (ibid.) is the "encounter with ourselves" in which "we come face to face with God, our Maker, whose image we bear, and who calls on us" to begin the outward journey towards the enemy (1999, p. 24). These journeys will require "the moral imagination" (2005, p. 28), where "we seek a birth of something new, a creation that can break us out of the

expected. We seek the creative act of the unexpected" (ibid.). This moral imagination has the "potential to find a way to transcend, to move beyond what exists while still living in it" (ibid.).

It is striking that much of the Guatemalan peace process was shaped by a sense of haste. The warring parties agreed on a quick closure of the past by granting themselves amnesty for most of the war related crimes and by demanding that people let bygones be bygones. There was no time in which both parties could seek creative ideas on how to reconstruct their communities or society at large. Instead of transcending "beyond what exists" (ibid.), violence remained the dominant behaviour to solve problems. Reconciliation was seen as a one-time event. Many victim organisations, however, insisted openly that reconciliation is a complex and time consuming process in which trust has to be rebuilt. As a consequence, these organisations, along with some churches, supported the victims with long processes geared towards psychological and spiritual recovery.

In contrast to the victims' journeys, many perpetrators as well as bystanders did not want to, or did not know how to, make either the inward or the outward journey. Some interviewees from the case study observed that many perpetrators block out feelings of shame by denying their own guilt and blaming their own atrocities on their victims (C15, 2012; NC6, 2012).

In addition, many churches do not support the concept of dealing with the past as a process and therefore do not provide spaces for lament, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Thus, reconciliation has no place where it could develop. Yet Lederach is convinced that, in countries where the churches have significant influence on all societal levels, church leaders have a "unique position for peacebuilding" (2010, p. 31). He observed that "higher-level [church] leaders are often drawn into formal and official roles as part of the national peace process; local lay leaders, priests, and various religious orders find themselves directly affected by the conflicts and develop programs and initiatives." (ibid.). This fact poses a difficult dilemma: "How to address the need for deep social, economic, and political changes that protect and improve the plight of the most vulnerable while being in *inevitable* relationship with leaders and groups, whether inside or outside the law, who justify the use of violence to achieve their competing vision of those same goals?" (ibid., p. 29, emphasis in original).

Lederach points out that reconciliation necessarily entails encounters at specific places. Referring to the encounter of Esau and Jacob (Gen 33), he remarks that the journeys towards

reconciliation entail encounters “with self, with the enemy, and with God” (1999, p. 25). Encounter means to realise that in the presence of true evil (ibid., p. 33) the voice of evil is not the only one. There is another voice, “the voice of God’s search for reconciliation as a call to love those who do us harm” (ibid., p. 38).

Lederach, however, adds that there is no “easy peace accomplished through promises of humanistic love. There is nothing human about loving one’s enemy. Living faithfully in the face of enemies is only possible with deep spiritual connection to God’s love and a willingness to live as vulnerably as Jesus did” (ibid., p. 41). In addition, in reference to the Psalms (e.g. Pss 55-58) (ibid., p. 33), this kind of a “theology of the enemy” (ibid.) honours “the cry for deliverance and also acknowledge[s] and give[s] legitimate place for anger” (ibid., pp. 41-42).

The interviews in Guatemala showed how difficult and controversial it is to talk about loving the enemy. C13 (2012) is convinced that Jesus’ command to love ones neighbour is a core issue in all churches in Guatemala. However, C10 (2012) observed that many churches demand love as a rule to obey without dealing with the situation of ongoing violence, for example in cases of domestic abuse, and thus they aggravate the situation for the victim. C10 (2012) and C12 (2012) therefore mention the necessity of love in conjunction with a larger process of healing, without accepting abuses and violence. C15 (2012) calls on all churches to be more dedicated towards promoting love instead of constantly fighting among themselves. A “theology of loving one’s enemy” seems to be missing in Guatemala – even in most churches. Love is mostly understood as a deed to accomplish rather than something that emerges from the relationship with God and the discipleship of Christ.

It is fundamental to Lederach (Lederach & Lederach, 2010) that the process of reconciliation is circular and not linear. He therefore suggests adding to the metaphor of “journeys” the metaphor of “voice” as central to reconciliation (p. 7). “Voice” has a “notion of movement that is both internal, within an individual, and external, taking the form of social echo and resonance that emerges from collective spaces that build meaningful conversation, resiliency in the face of violence and purposeful action” (ibid.). Subsequently, change is understood in a way that “reflects the nature and movement of sound” (ibid.) and therefore emphasises the cyclical nature of the reconciliation process (ibid.). This process needs to “draw simultaneously on qualities and capacities for *survival, resiliency,* and *flourishing*” (ibid., p. 53, emphasis in

original), which can hardly be assessed by sequential parameters (ibid.)[286]. Voice, however, "suggests more than one movement and none of these movements are linear" (ibid., p. 204). Therefore, "*reconciliation emerges as the mix of voices [that] finds its natural frequency*" (ibid., p. 205, emphasis in original). For reconciliation to happen, it "requires a container, a social space (...) that holds relationships wherein direct conversation and exchange take place. (...) These vibrations may circle and clang, go silent and recede, but when they mix, vibrate and find a natural frequency for a spacemoment, resonance emerges" (ibid., p. 206).

The metaphor "voice" makes clear, however, that the sound does not last permanently. Only the "elements that permit the creating and re-creating of meaningful conversation" (ibid., p. 207) can last longer and are the ones that need to be nurtured, "as a continuous engagement, constantly in need of renewal" (ibid.).

Regarding the difficulties that journeys towards reconciliation face, Lederach suggests concentrating on an intermediate step, on social healing:

> "Social healing offers a modest proposal. It suggests that in settings of protracted conflict the capacity of individuals and communities affected by violence to recuperate and stay in touch with their individual and collective voice creates the platform to build resiliency and foster meaningful conversation. In turn, voice and collective resiliency create significant echo that moves in multidirectional, simultaneously though unpredictable and often serendipitous patterns, touching and constructively impacting individual healing, the potential for reconciliation, and the impulse that mobilises ideas and movements for social change" (ibid., p. 209).

This research wishes to go further than social healing and discusses ways towards reconciliation. However, social healing as an intermediate step towards this aim provides a strong basis for reconciliatory work. The social healing approach shows that the most significant contributions to reconciliation are made within communities (ibid., p. 210), by focussing on "collective resiliency" (ibid., p. 211), and by engaging in "memory and hope" (ibid.) as a way to proactively "search for voice" (ibid.).

[286] Lederach and Lederach (2010) note that, especially for government and non-government programs, it is difficult to take into account the cyclical nature of reconciliation processes because funding and evaluation make it mostly necessary to follow sequential strategies. Cyclical approaches, therefore, are often perceived as counterproductive for programme development (p. 56). The cyclical approach, however, seems more feasible if reconciliation is associated less with a project than with spiritual practices which include elements of growth and the deepening of human experiences (ibid., p. 208), or with democracy which needs "engagement of voice, the building of spaces for deepening meaningful conversation and the rise of occasional resonance and social echo (...) all over again" (ibid.).

Many of the programmes that were intended to help overcome the consequences of the internal armed conflict in Guatemala have a linear approach. In some instances this is due to their special characteristics, like truth finding and fighting impunity through truth finding commissions, forensic investigations, and trials in court. The aim in these cases is to reveal the truth, to convict the culprit, and to help the survivors to mourn. Yet, this does not mean that if all these tasks have been accomplished reconciliation follows automatically. These valuable projects have to be regarded as an effort to give voice to the voiceless victims and to foster individual and community resilience. Yet, more than that is needed. Communities need long-term support in terms of provision of spaces where meaningful conversations can emerge. The churches in particular can give continuous support to local communities and individuals by providing a place where truth, mercy, justice, and peace (cf. Ps 85) are able to meet (Lederach, 1999, pp. 52-60).

Lederach's approach rejects every attempt to achieve a hasty peace and quick forgiveness which seek to be done with the past and to be able to concentrate solely on the future. A more acceptable approach for perpetrators and bystanders would be to be ready for the inward journey that could lead to repentance and for the outward journey that could lead to a truthful encounter with the victims by acknowledging one's own wrongdoing and the victims' suffering. Ultimately, if community is to be restored, perpetrators, bystanders, and the victims need to make these journeys and thus engage in meaningful conversation. But even if only a few people choose to give voice in this way, this could have significant repercussions within in the communities and the whole country (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 216).

5.2.3 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the approaches presented above belong to a "thicker" understanding of reconciliation where enemies are challenged to deal with each other in order to restore community and to overcome the strong boundaries between fighting groups. From a Christian perspective, the journeys towards reconciliation are initiated by God, who especially cares for the victim and calls the perpetrator to repent. These journeys consist of a constant interplay between the inward and the outward journey. With the inward journey a person begins to appreciate their common humanity, their own sinfulness, and the need for healing and forgiveness as a source of resilience that keeps the person human despite the enemy's efforts to dehumanise him or her. The outward journey consists of opposing narratives of the lie, redressing imbalances, and seeking to restore relationships.

These journeys towards reconciliation demand the perpetrator's acknowledgement of the harm done, repentance, and change. These reconciliatory efforts, though, are only successful if the victim is prepared to forgive and to accept that justice cannot fully be done. Reconciliation, therefore, arises where the victim offers mercy and peace and the perpetrator offers to submit to truth and justice. The victim relinquishes his desires for revenge and acts with grace. The perpetrator refrains from warding off feelings of shame and is ready to walk the humble path of repentance and restitution.

Within this process of reconciliation some confusion arises when discussing the conditionality of forgiveness. Is forgiveness unconditional or are there certain conditions that have to be fulfilled in advance? Volf divides forgiveness into two steps (2001, pp. 46-47): a first step which is unconditional and a second step that waits for an answer in the form of repentance. This distinction can be useful even though its teaching might be more challenging. It has been shown in the interviews that many Guatemalans regard forgiveness as either unconditional and being independent of the perpetrator's actions, or being conditional in a way that without justice and repentance no steps towards the other should be taken. Yet it is crucial to distinguish carefully: the unconditional part of forgiveness entails making space in oneself (cf. Volf, 1996, p. 127) which is ultimately nothing else then extending God's unconditional love to the enemy intending to "spark repentance" (Schreiter, 1992, p. 68). On the other hand, the victim's preparedness to forfeit any claims of restitution does not release the offender from repenting and restoring justice. Forgiveness echoes God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ, who died for mankind before their repentance as a prevenient grace (Rm. 5:6ff) that waits for the sinners answer in order to put forgiveness into effect, which then leads to a new life (2 Cor 5:17ff). [287]

This μετάνοια, entails looking into the past. The new life requires condemning the evil of the past and being clear about what went wrong and what has to change in the future (Jn 8:10). Forgiveness is not in opposition of a conflictive view and of raising the prophetic voice that opposes narratives of the lie, reveals the truth, and calls for justice and change. Therefore, forgiveness begins with loving one's enemy, condemns the evil of the past, hopes for repentance of the offender and fights for justice and change.

[287] A different approach that could bring more clarity into the discussion is given by Barnes (2011), who completely rejects calling forgiveness (or parts of it) unconditional: "Christian Scriptures teach that it is not the forgiveness of God that is unconditional but the love of God: God loves everyone (Jn 3:16), but his forgiveness is conditional on repentance" (ibid., p. 185).

Reconciliation does not happen in a linear way as a onetime event. It is of cyclical nature and can hardly be forced into fixed project plans. Reconciliation will need a place, a container where its differing voices can resonate, where people can express themselves in different ways over time and where they are heard. This could entail preliminary results that balance "the requirements of justice, accountability, stability, peace, and reconciliation" (Tutu, 1999, p. 27) yet without losing the sense that these outcomes are in fact preliminary, that they display the brokenness of the world, and that the fight for a more just world has not yet come to an end. Without being guided by the aim, which is to reconcile people by restoring victims, ensuring non-recurrence of the perpetrations and opening spaces for acts of repentance and forgiveness, the reconciliation process could be submitted to solely pragmatic considerations that might end in further oppression and a winner's justice.

On this difficult path, Jesus calls victims, perpetrators and bystanders to follow him on the way to overcome enmity and restore communion with God and with others. The Eucharist and baptism are places of encounter where the participants deal with the needs of each other and commit themselves to end separation.

As a consequence, the church has to assess its own role in the conflict and to repent for failing to protect the weak by being a passive bystander or by having sided with the oppressors. When the church becomes aware of its own sinfulness and limits, victims might invite the church to take an active part in promoting reconciliation. The church will then have to assume responsibility by raising its prophetic voice even in the face of threats and violence. This prophetic voice of the church consists of the many voices of the followers of Jesus who take up their cross by speaking out against injustice, by insisting on revealing the truth, and by putting love at the centre of their actions. This stance most likely triggers resistance from those who are in power and who want to hide the truth. It therefore requires a suffering servanthood that resists the temptation to give in to the narratives of the lie. In the midst of the challenges Christians have hope, by putting their trust in God, who loves them and calls them to love even the enemy. By so doing, the followers of Jesus prove their true faithfulness to their Lord, who ultimately is going to reconcile all things.

5.3 Systematic reflection: Towards a Model of Community Reconciliation

As described in the first chapters, a psychological trauma has a severe influence on individuals and communities and their capacities to construct a new life with new relationships. Individuals experience the fact that their capacity to process traumatic events has been exceeded and that they now have to reorient their lives in regard to their faith in life, others and the self. The impaired affect regulation, self destructive and suicidal behaviour, difficulties in relating to other people, and a change in the meaning system influence the surrounding community. The communities' reactions then influence the individual's recovery process. Helpful reactions entail security, establishing a sense of belonging and familiarity. In some cases it is necessary to offer psychotherapeutic treatment.

The findings on community trauma show that it is more than just the sum of traumatised individuals. The dynamics of a group have to be dealt with separately. Trauma experienced by a group with a shared identity could lead to the disintegration of a society's vital structures, could damage the social fabric, and shape the collective narrative in a way that the community becomes trapped in the past. A cycle of trauma could emerge and this could end in acts of violence by the former victims. Traumatised groups can preserve dormant traumatic events for centuries until a specific event triggers the surfacing of memories with destructive power.

Many approaches that help to break the cycle of trauma have been developed. In general, coping strategies aim at developing restorative identities, which are identities that restore the self and unfreeze beliefs about others, and thus open the path towards reconciliation. Key coping strategies are the improvement of life conditions, healing past wounds by finding new meaning and new narratives, and complexifying identities.

In many cases external intervention is appreciated by the victims. External intervention is a source of hope in that there are other people who care and validate the victims' feelings about the iniquities that happened. The international community is usually quick to send help where needed and is willing to take the responsibility for protecting victims, thus helping to prevent or reduce traumatic events. Outside experts, however, have to make sure that the host society owns their recovery process and that its agency is fostered.

The way towards reconciliation after a society has suffered severe trauma is complicated and needs, as described earlier, a multifaceted approach ranging from ensuring safety, providing basic needs, and psychotherapeutic support to long term identity development, dealing with memory, truth and justice, and agreeing on a shared history. The case study in Guatemala has shown that even while numerous experts from outside and within the country support the recovery process with great dedication using the latest scientific findings, the country still drowns in violence. The annual rate of violent deaths is almost as high as during the civil war era (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2012). Various reasons could be listed such as high levels of corruption within the police and the judiciary as well as in the political system, together with widespread impunity (ibid.) and difficult living conditions for the poor. Apart from the extensive expertise that exists on trauma and reconciliation, the following aspects of this research offer some additional thoughts derived from and aimed at the situation in Guatemala.

5.3.1 A non-violent approach in dealing with perpetrators

The very important requirement for protection of the victims from further violence has to be amended by a nonviolent treatment of the perpetrators. Instead of declaring retributive justice as the main goal, processes of restorative justice are needed.

The situation in Guatemala shows that the perpetrators have a strong tendency to justify their behaviour or to demand that others let bygones be bygones. As a consequence, victims and victim-organisations campaign with more fervour for justice, truth and the conviction of the victimisers. Thus, positions are hardening and dualistic narratives persist.

Considerable research has been conducted on how to help victims to overcome their trauma. Yet, as seen earlier, the atrocities committed by the perpetrators also cause trauma to themselves. The perpetrators' unresolved traumas are most likely to block communal recovery and reconciliation. In addition, the cycle of trauma indicates that the perpetrators are often also victims themselves.

For reconciliation to happen it is therefore crucial to help the perpetrators to engage in inward (towards themselves) and outward (towards others) journeys of reconciliation. In the New Testament we see God's special concern for the weak, the sick, and the sinners (Mt 9:36; Mk 2:17). This includes the perpetrator who is hurt through his or her own actions and who is called

to repent and thus to be ready for new relationships with God and others, particularly with his victims (Mk 1:14; 2 Cor 5:20).

The biblical demand for change when repenting (Lk 19:8; Rm 6:1ff; Eph 4:1ff) is rightly emphasised by the victims. Perpetrators and bystanders, but also victims, are, for various reasons mentioned earlier, tempted to profess quick forgiveness. However, forgiveness without both the perpetrators and the bystanders taking responsibility for their actions through repentance and redressing imbalances only encourages cheap grace (cf. Bonhoeffer, 1989). If forgiveness just remains an act that does not affect daily life, it is actually an impediment to change fostering the notion that the offences were not severe enough for change to be necessary.[288]

In Guatemala politicians have apologised for the role of the state during the internal armed conflict. However, victims are critical because of the missing actions and have lost faith in the sincerity of these apologies. Repenting and apologising entail the need for signs or acts of restitution that indicate change in the perpetrators' attitudes and a promise of non-recurrence.

In the bible it is God, "who knows the heart" (Ac 15:8; NIV, 2011) and it is he who leads towards repentance (Rm 2:4). It is God who makes change possible without releasing the sinners from their responsibilities (Php 2:12-13). In the Guatemalan context this would mean rejecting the perpetrators' accusations that the victim's legitimate demands for truth and restoration are a form of revenge[289] and at the same time assuring the perpetrators that violent acts of revenge will not be tolerated. In addition, the injustices need to be addressed through processes of restorative justice – with a focus on restoring instead of punishing[290]. The fight against impunity

[288] Aronson, Wilson and Akert (2013) explain people's tendency to justify their actions with the help of the theory of cognitive dissonance whereby the perpetrator's offence usually causes feelings of dissonance since the values which the perpetrator usually holds are in contrast to what he or she did. In order to diminish dissonance the perpetrator a) admits the wrongdoing and repents, thus he or she does not change his or her cognition and sticks to the core values which qualify the past behaviour as being wrong, or b) changes his or her cognition by telling him- or herself, for example, that the offences were not severe, or c) adds new cognitions telling him- or herself, for example, that the victim deserved the suffering. The perpetrator wants to protect his or her self-perception of being a rational and competent person and therefore behaves in a self-affirming way. This explains why perpetrators develop absurd reasons for their behaviour (pp. 138-139).

[289] Robben (2005) states that "the forgetting of violence is inextricably linked to the remembrance of violence because traumatic experiences are characterized by the inability to be either completely recalled or completely forgotten. It is precisely this obstruction to either total recall or total erasure, and the unending search for comprehensive understanding, that makes trauma so indigestible and memory so obsessive (p. 122).

[290] Volf (2005) argues that "to forgive is to blame, not to punish. But those who forgive need not abandon all disciplinary measures against offenders. (...) Those who forgive will have a system of discipline, but retribution will not be part of it. They ought to forgive rather than punish because God in Christ forgave. Christ is the end of retribution" (p. 170). Philpott (2010) suggest the use the term "restorative punishment" defined as a "political community's communication (...) [that] censures the wrongdoer for violating the community's just values and invites the perpetrator to recognize his or her injustice, show remorse, apologize, and eventually rejoin the community" (p. 113). Punishment prevents the wrongdoer from claiming a "standing victory" (ibid.) and defeats a narrative of the lie. Philpott is convinced that restorative punishment includes "imprisonment or other forms of hardship, which are essential to communicating the gravity of the

is one of the major issues in Guatemala. This concept rightly emphasises that the perpetrators have to bear the consequences for their actions. However, a restorative justice approach, instead of a punitive way of dealing with injustices and crime, places the victim in the centre and demands from the perpetrator that they take steps to address the victim's needs such as the acknowledgement of the suffering endured, provision of compensation, and restitution (cf. Zehr, 2005).

Therefore, the fight for impunity has to change its objectives from solely pursuing the conviction of the perpetrator to a more reconciliatory approach. As shown earlier, many victims are ready to forgive with only little in return (like knowing what had happened to their relatives). A restorative justice approach would give much more attention to the victims and could open a way for a new beginning for the perpetrator.

5.3.2 Bystanders should be helped to assume responsibility

Trauma recovery efforts until now did not sufficiently take into account the role of bystanders. It will be necessary to look at their role during times of violence and the consequences of that role for the victims in order to emphasise the responsibility of all members of a community or society. It is therefore crucial to uncover the truth about the times of violence, to reject narratives of the lie and work on mutually accepted history. The predominant bystanders' narratives of the lie are:

- The opinion that the past does not affect the present and the future. The bystander's wish to quickly return to normal life and to leave the old stories behind will have to be rejected and change demanded.
- The opinion that as a bystander they had no responsibility for the conflict. Recovery from trauma, however, is a task that includes the whole of society. It is not an illness of the few (cf. NC4).
- The bystanders' notion that security is gained through a "firm hand". Therefore, it will be central to show that using violence is a learned behaviour and that there are non-violent forms of resolving conflicts.
- The opinion that the security forces stand above criticism and that consequently, victims from the security forces' violence must have done something wrong. Otherwise, the police or the military would not have taken action. Therefore, the role of the security forces needs to be uncovered.

Bystanders will have to be confronted with their failure and they will have to bear some of the consequences of their detachment by participating in an overall restorative justice process. This process will have to define which meaningful contributions bystanders could make to restore

offense" (ibid.). The aim is thus not a "consequentialism" nor a "retributivism" (ibid., p. 112) but the restoration "of persons, relationships, and political order" (ibid., p. 113).

communion. Among other things, this will entail repentance and redressing imbalances for the bystanders' failures. This acknowledgment of being part of an oppressive environment will be most helpful for the victims. To the present day, the non-indigenous part of the society has not yet dealt with the questions of their own involvement in the oppression of the Mayan communities over the centuries.

Bystanders can also be affected and drawn into the cycle of trauma. The consequences are fear based choices, dualistic narratives ("us" vs. "the communists"/guerrillas). It will, consequently, be important to engage bystanders in trauma recovery processes (e.g. assessing the need for security, improving living conditions and working on new narratives and meaning).

However, not all bystanders were passive. Individuals from all parties who spoke up against violence and who were actively supporting reconciliation should be publicly honoured as a means of breaking dualistic narratives. People from all parts of society would then notice that there have been courageous and trustworthy people on all sides.

5.3.3 Churches need to become key players by initiating a movement of repentance

The churches in Guatemala are already a major factor in Guatemalan society. As mentioned before, most Guatemalans belong to one of the numerous congregations. However, not many churches have analysed their own role in the history of oppression in Guatemala. Instead, like other bystanders, many insist on forgiveness without demanding significant change by the perpetrators or within society.

However, if the church would acknowledge its own failures and engage in acts of repentance it could, by apologising for their actions or their silence, set off a national movement of repentance for the oppression and violence committed in the country since the Spanish invasion. To this day, the *conquista* is the indigenous people's chosen trauma. Acknowledging the victims' suffering is central to the theories of trauma recovery and reconciliation.

Just as in the Old Testament God called his people to repent, a country like Guatemala could change if the Christian community repents instead of concentrating on offerings (cf. Is 1:11ff; many Guatemalan churches focus on monetary offerings and gaining money). This *μετάνοια* or repentance (Mk 1:14) could initiate a new way of caring for the weak and oppressed. New communion could arise overcoming the split between the rich and the poor, indigenous and non-indigenous (cf. Gal 3:28). Reconciliation would be more than just an event concerning the

individual and his or her relationship with God. The aspect of overcoming enmity between societal groups would regain importance (cf. J. H. Yoder, 2001).

Therefore, the churches in Guatemala will have to develop a more comprehensive understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation by emphasising the requirement for change processes as an inward and outward journey. Instead of campaigning that the victims should forgive their victimisers, a campaign encouraging churches to repent for their failures in the past would be the first step. Even if repentance is not a prerequisite for forgiveness and forgiveness remains an inalienable aspect in the reconciliation process, it is an act of acknowledgment of the victims' sufferings and the perpetrators' or bystanders' failures.

Only if the church itself has asked for forgiveness (cf. Schreiter) can it teach others about forgiveness. Forgiveness, though, will be costly and potentially dangerous. It requires at first the unveiling of the truth and the condemnation of wrongdoing (cf. Volf). Thus, the church will have to learn an attitude of a suffering servanthood (cf. Yoder).

This, however, means a major shift in many churches' activities. Churches will have to take sides, oppose intimidation, and accept conflicts with a powerful opposition. Yet in this way, the church truly follows Christ and serves as an example for others.

5.3.4 External intervention has to take the spiritual landscape into account.

As described earlier, reconciliation is a cyclical process that has to take into account the specific situation and environment in which a conflict arose. Consequently, there is no general recipe on how to deal with a specific situation. There is no "one size fits all" in a reconciliation processes. As could be seen in the interviews, the Guatemalan situation does not fit neatly into the cycle of trauma. Indigenous people in Guatemala seem not to seek revenge in a situation of ongoing discrimination and of an unresolved past but to have given up to lift their voices. Simultaneously, a number of victims organisations engaged in non-violent forms of resistance, giving an example on how to confront injustices. Subsequently, the indigenous population neither remains in a victim/survivor cycle nor moves towards a enemy/aggressor cycle nor breaks free towards reconciliation. It is a status "in between". Organisations that wish to support the victims within the indigenous community, hope to gradually empower and to support the recovery and reconciliation process. In Guatemala though, it might be possible that some victims supporting organisations act in an overfunctioning way, by taking responsibility off the

victims and thus impeding a more active role in dealing with their past. As a consequence, the transition process is dealt with by proxy between well-meaning organisations and the political and legal system. Organisations should therefore carefully evaluate when to step back and to discern at what point a specific programme has become redundant or even damaging to its cause. This requires humility and may raise anxiety within the group they supported as well as within the organisation.

One way of empowering people without overfunctioning is to strengthen their spiritual resources. It is therefore important to include and encourage the participation of spiritual leaders and to deal with spiritual questions, as they are key resilience and recovery factors. Large parts of Guatemala's population are connected to one of the numerous Christian churches. Help from outside, especially from non-church agents should therefore take this fact into account by taking the spiritual dimension more seriously. In addition, the Mayan belief, the Mayan *cosmovisión*, should be treated with great respect and should play an important role in shaping the process of overcoming community trauma. It has to be conceded that the churches made, and in many cases still make, it difficult to work together on topics of reconciliation because they are not ready to make the necessary changes which have been outlined above. However, the churches in Guatemala are highly trusted[291] and could be decisive participants on the way towards reconciliation[292].

Ecumenical and interreligious connections should therefore be encouraged to foster new narratives about the others and to learn from each other in an environment of mutual respect and love. Denominational church leaders from outside Guatemala should carefully avoid contributing to the divisions in Guatemala by bringing the divisions of their own country of origin into Guatemala. Instead they should encourage with examples of successful dialogue[293] and stress ways of overcoming divisions and enmity.

As mentioned earlier, outside intervention is helpful to empower local communities with education being a core element in enabling them to develop their own approaches towards the problems they face. In Guatemala, however, special attention needs to be given to theological

[291] The 2011 survey on the situation of the youth in Guatemala showed high levels of trust and attachment to the churches (Argueta Hernández, 2011).
[292] See also Lederach, The Long Journey Back to Humanity (2010) discussing the role of the catholic church in countries where the majority of the population belongs to this church.
[293] For example the Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference in the years 1998-2003 (Catholic Church & Mennonite World Conference, 2003).

teaching. The strong influence on the communities by churches and their leaders makes it crucial to enable these leaders to reflect on the country's trauma in a theological way. The case study of this research has shown that special attention should be given to the topics of violence and non-violence, forgiveness in connection with the demand for change and redressing imbalances, the churches' responsibilities for the wellbeing of the community and its need to engage in overcoming separation and enmity between individuals, ethnic groups, and communities. Additionally, churches are expected to offer support in rebuilding identities that had been shattered as a result of traumatic experiences (cf. Taylor, 1989). Shaping the framework around the moral and spiritual stand of their members, places high responsibility on church leaders yet it is an invaluable opportunity for fostering healing and reconciliation.

This gives the institutions of theological education a central role in dealing with community trauma and reconciliation. It would be helpful to encourage regular exchange between students and professors from local and international institutions. External intervention could then support and strengthen local efforts to deal with the country's past.

5.3.5 Love should be considered to be a core factor in trauma recovery

It has been shown that it is vital for the start of a reconciliation process that the victim chooses to engage in forgiveness and reconciliation. This, however, requires the difficult task of loving one's enemies. In addition to all the elements mentioned in this research that foster recovery, special attention should be given to love (cf. Lederach). Through love, the demands for justice and truth can be shaped in a form that restores identity and helps the perpetrator to engage in meaningful discussions and acts of repentance.

Love is the centre of Christianity (Sedmak, 2007, p. 15) embodied in Jesus Christ. It is Christ who invites his followers to emulate him in his love for the world. Lovelessness, in contrast, is a characteristic of hell as a place of "impersonal beings without identity"[294] (ibid., p. 16).

As mentioned before, developing restorative identities is crucial in a trauma recovery process. Sedmak emphasises the connection between identity development and love. Identity means finding a place "from which I speak and in which I want to be spoken to"[295] (ibid., p. 18) and develops through an exchange with others within a communion of the "self among selves"[296]

[294] "unpersönliche Identitätslosigkeit".
[295] "von dem aus ich spreche und an dem ich angesprochen werden möchte".
[296] "als Selbst unter Selbsten".

(ibid., p. 19). Love means, being committed to specific relationships (ibid., p. 20). Identity and love consequently belong together because those who love, know who they are (ibid.).

Traumatic events can destroy identity, and thus lead to the loss of love. Sedmak remarks: "Crises of identity take away the power to love"[297] (ibid.). Therefore, if reconciliation is to happen the restoration of identities is crucial – as has been widely discussed earlier. Identity development, however, is not an end in itself but aims at reconstructing relationships and community through love. This love ultimately enables a victim to risk new relationships with former oppressors.

Sedmak states "Love can be understood as an attitude. If loving is understood as an art, then this art becomes a 'habitus', a second nature, an attitude that shapes all actions and contours all forms of life"[298] (ibid., p. 47). It can be an act of love to demand certain actions from others (ibid., p. 74)[299]. The victims demand that the oppressors have to change and engage in acts of repentance and restitution is a genuine characteristic of love. Conversely, by not opposing actions that damage relationships, the basis of love is threatened and thus identity is at risk.[300] Love invites the other to abandon certain places and positions in order to strive again (ibid.). This underscores the opinion stated earlier that engaging in processes of truth finding is not necessarily an act of revenge but can be an act of love to foster reconciliation. Even though digging up the past could be part of a revengeful mind-set, the interviews with the Guatemalan experts reveal a far more generous attitude shared by the victims that emphasises the need to know in order to deal constructively with the past.

Fear in general and fear of confronting others in particular "restrains love" (ibid., p. 77)[301]. Guatemala's atmosphere of fear and violence as described by the interviewees destroys love. The country's history of institutions that generate fear constitutes a form of "structural lovelessness"[302] (ibid., p. 86). As a result, an environment of self-centred attitudes grows. The increase of safety and the promotion of trust in institutions, especially in the police, the military and the judicial system, will be crucial for reconciliation to begin. Thus, instead of pursuing a

[297] "Identitätskrisen nehmen die Kraft zu lieben".
[298] "Liebe kann auch als eine Einstellung verstanden werden. Wenn man Lieben als eine Kunst versteht, dann wird diese Kunst zu einem 'Habitus', zur zweiten Natur, zu einer Einstellung, die sämtliche Handlungen prägt und Lebensform konturiert".
[299] Sedmak (2007, p. 74) mentions as an example the encounter between Jesus and Peter in Luke 5:4.
[300] Sedmak (2007, p. 50) observes that "the loss of love can be a loss of identity". ("der Verlust der Liebe kann Identitätsverlust sein").
[301] "Angst engt Liebe ein".
[302] "Strukturelle Lieblosigkeiten".

fear-based approach to safety by militarising large parts of everyday life[303] non-violent approaches of dealing with conflicts need to be promoted at all levels of society, within families, schools, and the country's institutions. All state institutions in particular should look for and change fear inducing procedures and approaches in order to reduce society's overall level of fear.

5.3.6 Conclusion

The way towards reconciliation needs a meeting place, a place of encounter where victims, perpetrators, and bystanders meet each other and God (Lederach, 1999, p. 25).

The diagram below shows the connection between the different societal groups on the path towards reconciliation.

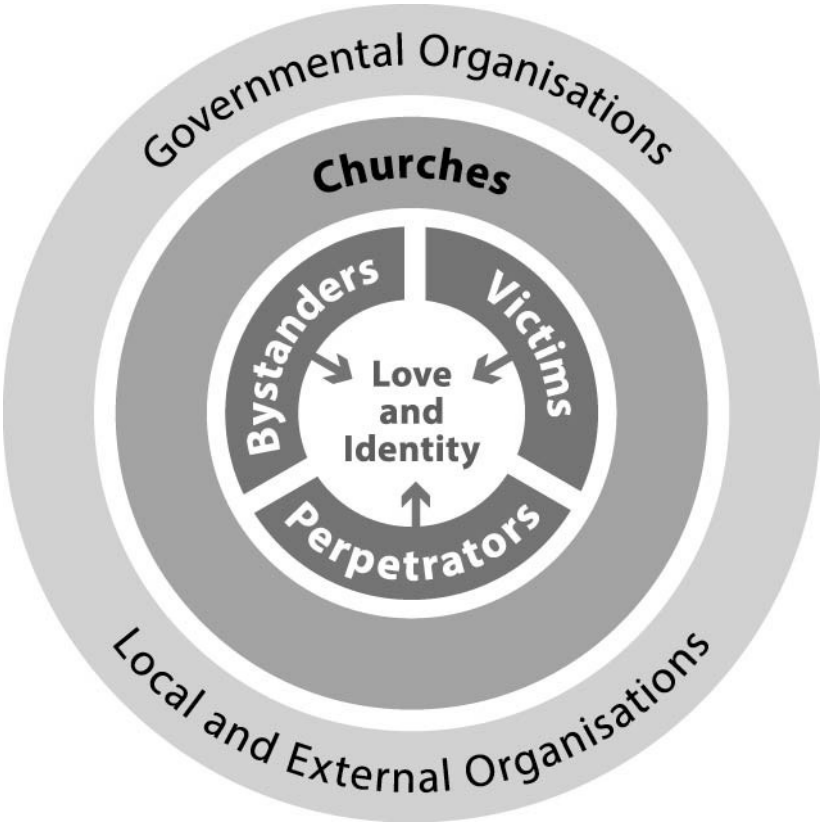

Figure 5-1 The meeting place for reconciliation

On the outer circle, actors, like governmental and non-governmental organisations, engage in shaping the country's future, concentrating mostly on specific groups (mainly victims or

[303] "There is a lot of violence in the family, there is a lot of this military culture, this culture of security" ("En la familia hay mucha violencia hay mucho esa cultura militar esa cultura de seguridad") (C13, 2012).

perpetrators). Close cooperation between these organisations would be helpful yet reality shows that aims and strategies for what reconciliation is and how it could be achieved vary significantly. The churches, placed in the next circle, have a central role in dealing with the past and are crucial partners for governmental and non-governmental organisations in the process of developing new narratives and new meanings after trauma. The vast majority of the Guatemalan citizens belong to a church. Therefore, churches have in their midst victims, perpetrators, and bystanders simultaneously (third circle) and have the possibility of enabling all three groups to meet in an attitude of identity-affirming love. This is one of the churches' most difficult tasks yet core to their mission of becoming reconciled communities (2 Co 5:19-20).

At this meeting place each party contributes in a specific way to overcoming trauma and enmity:

- the perpetrators with acts of repentance;
- (passive) bystanders by taking responsibility for past failures and for the future development of their society;
- the victims contribute with their willingness to walk on the path towards reconciliation by forgiving and inviting the perpetrators to perform acts of repentance;
- the churches help victims, perpetrators, and bystanders assuming their responsibility by reflecting on their own past, engaging in acts of repentance, and caring for the victims through offering practical and spiritual support;
- governmental organizations by providing their expertise and ensuring a functioning justice system and the rule of law.
- non-governmental organisations by providing their expertise without overfunctioning and by acknowledging the importance of the spiritual dimension;

The meeting place needs then to become a place, where the "art of loving" (cf. Sedmak, 2007, p. 47) is being practiced and identities are being complexified and strengthened. All parties have to take difficult steps towards each other and to acknowledge that there can be no reconciled community without the other person. In the midst of these challenges, the participants can trust in God who promises his presence and his peace (Jn 14:27) to those who meet in his name in order to work for the restoration of the communion (cf. Mt 5:9; 18:20).

Appendix

Organisations which were represented in the interviews

American Friends Service Committee

"The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. (...) AFSC has worked throughout the world in conflict zones, in areas affected by natural disasters, and in oppressed communities to address the root causes of war and violence" (American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), 2012a). In Guatemala City, AFSC supports local initiatives to improve security and peace (American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), 2012b).

Asociación Grupo Ceiba

The *Asociación Grupo Ceiba* is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation, dedicated to improving the situation of young people and curtailing acts of violence between and against them. Ceiba is currently active in ten provinces in Guatemala, helping approximately 8000 people (Asociación Grupo Ceiba, 2012).

La Campaña Nacional de Perdón y Conciliación para Guatemala[304]; Plan Mil Días[305]

Supported by the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, in 2009/2010 the organisation *Plan Mil Días* organised a campaign, through various channels of the mass media, to promote forgiveness. The aim was to sensitise Guatemalans about forgiveness and to encourage discussion about this topic (Chuc, 2010; Perdona, 2012).

Centro de Paz Barbara Ford

The Barbara Ford Centre for Peace is a Roman Catholic association that promotes the human and spiritual development of people in need. A special focus is on working with indigenous people (Centro de Paz Barbara Ford, 2012).

Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales en Centro América[306] (CEDEPCA)

The Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies in Central America "is a training center that provides safe, accepting, creative spaces where women and men from many different

[304] "National Campaign for Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Guatemala"
[305] "Plan of a Thousand Days"
[306] "Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies in Central America"

Christian traditions can deepen their faith while they strengthen their ability to confront the key issues facing their communities" (Centro Evangélico de Estudios Pastorales en Centro América (CEDEPCA), 2012)

Compassion Guatemala

"Compassion International exists as a Christian child advocacy ministry that releases children from spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty and enables them to become responsible, fulfilled Christian adults. (...) Compassion helps more than 1.2 million children in 26 countries" (Compassion International, 2012). Compassion Guatemala supports projects all over the country.

Cooperativa Ruth y Noemí

The *Cooperativa Ruth y Noemí* was founded during the time of the internal armed conflict to help widows build up small scale businesses. Even today, their manufactured products find customers in Guatemala and abroad.

Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial[307] (ECAP)

ECAP gives psychosocial support, during forensic investigations, to the relatives of victims that have been abducted, or arbitrarily or extra judicially executed. In addition, ECAP provides professional training in supervision for psychologists in partnership with the German Association of Supervision and the University of Marburg, Germany (Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial (ECAP), 2012).

Fundación de Antropología Forense en Guatemala[308] (FAFG)

The *Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG)* is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation that aims to foster the judicial system and respect for human rights by leading forensic investigations and by providing information about human rights violations and unresolved deaths. The foundation supports Guatemalan society in clarifying recent history relating particularly to unsolved crimes from the internal armed conflict era (Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG), 2012).

[307] "Team for Community Studies and Psycho-Social Actions"
[308] "Foundation for Forensic Anthropology in Guatemala"

Fundación Myrna Mack

The *Fundación Myrna Mack* is an organisation dedicated at combating impunity and fostering peace, democracy and the rule of law in Guatemala. The foundation works in the areas of justice, human rights and advocacy (Fundación Myrna Mack, 2012).

Fundación Sobrevivientes[309]

The foundation is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation without political or religious objectives. The organisation is formed by women who survived different kinds of violence. They provide support for girls who have been beaten, raped or who suffered attempted murder (Fundación Sobrevivientes, 2012).

Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo[310] **(GAM)**

The GAM was founded during the internal armed conflict when the State of Guatemala started to use forced disappearances as a strategy of war. Its aims were to fight against the army's practice of abducting people, against impunity, and to help to find the whereabouts of the disappeared people. Today the main focus of GAM is to promote human rights and to help build a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and democratic state (Grupo Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), 2012; Instituto Internacional de Aprendizaje para la Reconciliación Social (IIRS), 2012).

Friends Peace Teams (FPT, Quakers)

"Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT's programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution"(Friends Peace Team (FPT), 2012).

Liga Guatemalteca de Higiene Mental[311]

The *Liga's* mission is to foster and attend mental health issues in Guatemala with a special focus on those parts of the population with higher risk of vulnerability (Liga Guatemalteca de Higiene Mental, 2012).

[309] "survivors"
[310] "Group of Mutual Support"
[311] "Guatemalan League for Mental Hygiene"

Ministerio Público de Guatemala (MP)

The main tasks of the MP are to lead criminal prosecutions, to conduct criminal investigations and to look after the strict fulfillment of the law (Ministerio Público, 2012).

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala[312] (ODHAG)

The Archbishop of Guatemala's Office for Human Rights works by promoting and defending human rights and helping to construct a more inclusive society (Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG), 2012).

Red Regional de Justicia y Paz[313] (RedPaz)

RedPaz is an organisation, built on the Christian Anabaptist tradition, to strengthen relations between churches and other organisations in order to systematise different approaches to justice and peace and to cooperate with each other.

Semilla - Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano

The theological seminary "*Semilla*" provides biblical and theological education for ten Anabaptist conventions in Central America and Mexico with a special focus on peace and justice (Semilla, 2012).

Universidad Rafael Landívar (URL)

The University Rafeal Landívar is a university with more than 25,000 students with a Jesuit tradition (Universidad Rafael Landívar (URL), 2012).

A few interviewees were not linked to specific organisations but work as individual activists or as pastors of churches.

[312] "The Archbishop of Guatemala's Office for Human Rights."
[313] "Regional Network for Justice and Peace "

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